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VINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE OF ENTERTAINMENT

MAY-1922
20 CENTS



by Guy Hoff

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MAY
1922

AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. XLIX
No. 3

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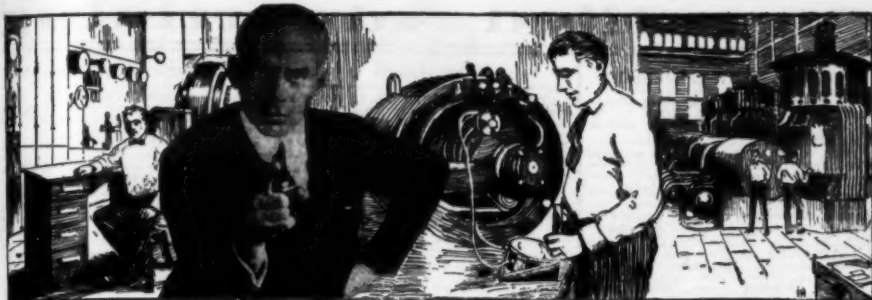
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With your help I am now in what you could call perfect health; sleep perfectly; my blood test is 100% pure; my complexion is wonderful and my weight is 128 pounds—a loss of 40 pounds."

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Yet a subtle enemy was at work, preparing to destroy her youth.

She was putting on superfluous flesh. But how could she prevent it? It seemed that most men and women, once they became overweight, began naturally to add more and more flesh until they became very stout. Already she had gained flesh until she weighed 168 pounds, 40 pounds more than her normal weight.

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She began to starve herself in an effort to reduce. She even gave up one meal a day and ate barely enough to satisfy her hunger. But it only weakened her without taking off a pound of flesh.

She exercised, took drugs and dieted—all in vain. She was still 40 pounds overweight.

Mrs. Vermilya had just about resigned herself to being fat and unattractive when she heard about a remarkable new discovery by a food specialist. She found out that he had discovered the simple natural law upon which the whole secret of weight control is based. He had actually discovered a way to reduce weight by eating. And she had been starving herself!

A Remarkable Reduction

She gave up all medicines, starving and expensive "treatments" and just followed the one simple new law that has been discovered. It meant almost no change in her daily routine. She found that she could do about as she pleased, eating many of the foods she had been denying herself, enjoying her meals as never before.

"Think of it!" she writes. "I didn't have to do anything discomforting, didn't have to deny myself hardly anything I liked—and yet my excess flesh vanished like magic. And my complexion became so clear and smooth that my friends began to beg me for my beauty secret!"

What Is the New Discovery?

The remarkable new discovery—weight control—is the result of many years of extensive research by



Mrs. Vermilya before she found out about the new discovery. Weight 168 pounds.



Mrs. Vermilya after she found out about the new discovery to lose weight. Weight 128 pounds.

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LOST 28 POUNDS IN 30 DAYS

"I found your instructions easy to follow and your method delightful. In 30 days I lost 28 pounds—3 pounds the very first week. My general health has been greatly benefited."

(Signed) Earl A. Kettel.
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I weighed 196 pounds. I reduced to 154 pounds and am still reducing. Before reducing I was always tired. Now I can walk 6 miles and feel no ill effect. My complexion has wonderfully improved also.

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"I reduced from 175 pounds to 153 pounds (a reduction of 22 pounds) in two weeks. Before I started I was flabby, heavy and sick. Stomach trouble bothered me all the time. I feel wonderful now."

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He found that certain foods eaten together are almost immediately converted into excess fat. But these very same foods, when eaten in combination with different foods, actually cause the fat which has accumulated to be consumed. It's not a matter of eating the right food, it's a matter of eating the right combination and avoiding the wrong ones.

This is not a starving "treatment" or special food fad. It's entirely new and different. You can bring your weight down to where you want it and keep it there practically no trouble. Instead of starving yourself, or putting yourself through any of those uncomfortable or painful self-denial, you actually eat off flesh! You even eat delicious foods which you may have been denying yourself. All you have to do is follow one simple natural law and you weigh exactly what you should.

Christian has incorporated his remarkable secret of weight control into 13 easy-to-follow lessons called "Weight Control—the Basis of Health." He offers to send the course absolutely free to any one who writes in the coupon.

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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XLIX.

MAY, 1922.

No. 3.



Cock Robin

By Beatrix Demarest Lloyd

Author of

"The Murder of William Joseelyn Ferris,"

"A Touch of Sun," etc.

CHAPTER I.

JEREMY OGDEN woke slowly in the dim May morning light, conscious of nothing so much as his wish that the window were shut. But as he stretched his not inconsiderable length in the bed, luxuriously, he remembered that his nights in sleeping cars were, for the present at least, over, and on the instant broad awake he rolled over and looked at the door. It was closed, however, and promised nothing, and the man sighed, but lightly.

It was good to be lying in soft linen again, linen as white as salt. Beneath the disorder of his youngly graying hair, his pleasant eyes wandered about the familiar room, satisfying their four weeks' hunger for such things as ruddy old mahogany and soft, mellow hangings. But the eyes rested longest on the dressing table where, among the modest silver of his masculine kit, stood a battered, leather picture frame, too shabby not to have been as often a traveler as himself. It held the picture of a lovely baby girl and Jerry smiled upon it. What would the room, charming as it might be, have been with-

out it? With it, indeed, his barren quarters in the cheerless building boastfully called the "hotel" in the desolate Western village of his late exile, had had a touch of dearness. He recalled that room with a shudder, and remembered that his spirit had revolted from the sheet of newspaper that covered the yellow pine bureau, and that he had spread down his finest linen handkerchief beneath his girl-child's little feet.

He was dozing off again when a portentous footstep sounded in the corridor. He knew it well from the swift pattering he waited for, and as from the corner of his lids he observed the inch or so of gingham apron that always preceded Kathleen into a room, he promptly closed his eyes once more. For Kathleen's modesty was of a vicarious variety and not for meat on Friday would she have come in to close the window "and himself abed" had his eyes been open. When she went softly out, leaving the door ajar, his impatient look followed her.

It was so long since he had been told to "wake up" in the sweet familiar way. Heavens, had he not compelled

himself to wait for the touch of his tiny idol—why, hours! Arriving late from the train the night before, he had tiptoed into Barbara's room, and had knelt by her ridiculous little brass bed and looked at her as she slept until he was afraid to look longer, for she had stirred drowsily under his eyes, cuddling down like a sleepy kitten in a warm shawl, and the bewitching sweetness of her was more than he could bear and keep his distance. He had gone to bed without as much as a kiss on the taffy-colored hair that spread out upon the lace pillow like gold threads.

A little sound at the door brought a stab of happiness, cutting short his self-commiseration. It was not a laugh, nor a word, but an indescribable and inarticulate compound of tenderness and breathless delight. Then, unable to wait, a little figure all pink with a golden top, burst the door open to its full width and hurled itself at his bed.

"Wake up, Jerwy, wake up!"

Oh, there was no use to command him. His eyes were open and full of light. As she flung herself forward his arms were around her and she rolled over on his breast, crowing and laughing and kissing, and he held her closely, feeling the throb of her warm little heart in every fiber of his being. There was something about Barbara in a pink-flannel "johnny" that might have made Lilith and all her daughters jealous. In a flounced proper frock and her most maidenly deportment, she was lovely, but in the bifurcated garment of her abandon, in which she looked like a big sweet-pea blossom, her thick curls rumped into an invitation to frolic, and the elfin allurements of Puck himself glittering in her eyes, she was adorable.

Ogden was not the man to refuse her invitation to "wumple me wound," but she came upright with some dexterity and plumped herself solidly astride his chest.

"My hat, you've grown heavy!" groaned Ogden.

She laughed—a brilliant, coloratura trill. Then she grew grave. "It's my head," she said seriously. "I've learned a new say-it."

"Weight o' wisdom!" quoth he. Then, with due anxiety: "May I hear it?"

She nodded, smiled, sobered again and slid her flannel-enshrouded feet past his shoulders to rest companionably against his ears.

"Who killed Cock Robin?"

"I," says ve sparrow,
"Vith my bowen arrow,
I killed Cock Robin!"

"Dear me," cried Ogden, unnerved by the tragedy, "What a terrible thing!"

Barbara regarded him gravely.

"It's a very long 'say-it,'" he added tactfully. "How can you remember it all?"

The affair had been a great success, but in the midst of a laughing lunge at him, she drew back suddenly and regarded him largely the while she slid from the bed and stamped her foot.

"Jerwy, det up now," she said inexorably. "Make bread 'n' butter for Baabra." And not until she saw him fairly on his way to his tub did she leave him when, with the firm carriage of the executive head of the family, she marched off to deliver herself into the hands of Kathleen.

They met again at breakfast. As a matter of fact, when he joined her she was already installed in her rather exalted position at the head of the table, and was deep in a discussion with Kathleen concerning the orthodoxy of the belief that crusts of bread would "stick to her ribs," a consummation of doubtful comfort that they, for some reason inexplicable to mere man, devoutly seemed to wish.

Kathleen, square and flat of face, body and affection, looked up as he

came in, greeting him with a smile which was to the smile of the average being what the blue of the Adriatic is to the water in a pail.

"And how are ye, Misther Ogden?" she inquired, wiping her hand upon her apron preparatory to his kindly clasp. "Shure 'tis a pleasure to have ye home ag'in. Th' little wan and Oi have been talking of ye ivery day."

She hardly waited for her answer, perhaps having read it in his brown face and sparkling eyes.

"There's letters by your place, sor, and th' papers. And your coffee, sor. Sit shtill, me lamb. Is your coffee to your mind?"

"Delicious," said Ogden truthfully. "I haven't had a decent cup of coffee since I went away."

"Ye doan't tell me!"

"But I do tell you. On the trains they give one a weak solution of some sort of substitute lozenge, I believe."

"Mother of Hivin!" said Kathleen, to whom the unintelligible phrase suggested nothing but the formula of an acute poison.

"And out there, they labor under the belief that a wandering shoe lace or a layer of rust or any little addition of that sort in the pot adds an indefinable charm to the beverage. You take it from a friend, Kathleen, they'd think something was left out of your coffee."

"Lift out of it, is it, sor? Oi loike that. And where might the place be?"

"Oh, ever so far away, Kathleen. I'm afraid you can't run over to have it out with them. They call it Arizona in their milder moments. I'll have some honey, please."

"To think of it!" said Kathleen, with warmth, though to think of what she did not say. She gave him the honey and stood near, watching the mellifluous sirup drip into a fat pool on his plate. "And was iverything so bad as that, sor?"

"So bad as the coffee—or the lan-

guage? Well, no. Things in genefal went very well indeed. I don't mind telling you, Kathleen—for I know I can trust you not to tell the landlord and tempt him to raise the rent—that I think we are going to make quite a little money out of this."

"Lord love ye, I'll niver tell him!" cried Kathleen, whose mind like many another in her position failed almost invariably to grasp the main point. "Not a wurd!"

Barbara, remembering suddenly that she was not to suck her spoon, took it guiltily from her little three-cornered mouth, and inquired with far greater perspicacity than her nurse had shown in dealing with the matter:

"How much money?"

"Enough," said Ogden slowly. "Let me see, enough to buy you a white silk dress."

"Dat's a dreat deal, is it?"

Her father groaned hollowly for answer. But he overdid it and she knew he was joking.

It must be said for Ogden that he was pleased not so much by the prospect of financial reward as that he had succeeded—he felt sure of it—where others had failed, and if a man is to take pride in his work, this additional satisfaction may surely be granted him.

His specialty was the solving of other men's troubles, and Barbara had had white silk dresses before now. The clearest-headed and most daring-hearted member of his class in the Mines, he had risen through twelve years of incessant labor and brilliant accomplishment to a place high among the most successful consulting engineers of his time.

There had been another Barbara, four years ago. She had had yellow hair too, and a pretty winsomeness. Ogden had had the gentleness to try to forget in his years of widowerhood how little there had been beside that winsome manner. She had been, in his playful,

sentimental moods only, a companion. In his work, save for that visible result of silk dresses, she had taken no interest, but had held him back from possible progress by querulous complaints. He had found to his amazement that she "did not care to read." She had inhabited his house, but not his life.

Even the promise of motherhood had only made her fretful. She had brooded over the restrictions and chafed at the responsibility.

The kingdom and the glory of creation meant nothing to her but lassitude and pain and exigent regulations, and once when he had found her apparently plunged in marveling reverie, and had hoped the dual life was bringing her toward a new womanliness, he had been wounded to find she pondered only the possibility of losing her graceful, girlish figure. After the child was born, she pouted and wailed for the strength that did not return, and so often wished she were dead that when the final quiet release did come, he had wondered in a dull, stunned way if she were content at last.

He had cherished her tenderly and his devotion had never wavered, but there was something in the man's heart that she had never possessed. It would have burdened her perhaps, for it was a thing of infinite responsibilities. It was love.

Now that there was no one but little Barbara to work for, he let his ambition ride him hard. There was no one to complain daintily of his engrossment in the work, no one to claim neglect. Barbara stared at him in round-eyed worship when he worked at home over the drawings and the calculations she must never and did never touch. She would play silently with her toys at a distance, lifting her head and pushing back her forward-fallen hair to gaze again at this most wonderful being.

On this present occasion of their first

reunion at table, she respected his absorption, though her eyes were fixed so pertinaciously upon him that the whispering Kathleen, who also revered his silences, had to put the egg spoon cautiously laden at intervals into the inattentive little mouth.

But he came out of his brown study briskly enough, caught her up and held her while Kathleen wiped her untarnished lips, and carried her off to sit on his knee at his desk.

Barbara, her incredibly short petticoats spreading like a white hollyhock skillfully inverted, leaned forward and put her two pretty hands about the nickel neck of the telephone as Ogden drew it nearer. She seemed gravely to consider herself of the greatest helpfulness. All through his conversation with invisibles, he was conscious of the pressure of her warm little body and, even with a frown of annoyance on his face, his eyes looked tenderly at her restless, golden head.

"Beekman 9417—right. Yes—hullo—yes, waiting. Hullo—I want to speak to Mr. Dorpoint. Ogden. No, Ogden, O-g-d-e-n. Yes, very well. Yes. Who? No, I want to speak to Mr. Dorpoint. I know he is, so am I. Who is this? Well, Mr. Curtis, I'm very sorry, but Mr. Dorpoint asked me particularly to call him up as soon as I returned. Very well—yes. Waiting."

In the pause that followed, Ogden smoothed the child's hair.

"These millionaires are hard to get at, Babs," he said musingly, and she nodded with sage conviction.

"Hello, yes," said Ogden. "I dare say. No, Mr. Curtis, I can't call up later. I shall be infernally busy at my own office. Thank you. Yes, waiting."

He tweaked Barbara's little ear this time.

"That's the way to treat them," he said confidentially, and she took a firmer grip as if she had the elusive millionaire by the throat and meant to

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hold him there until her father had finished with him.

"Eh, yes! Oh, how do you do, Mr. Dorpoint? I had almost despaired of—oh, that's all right. Yes, everything is quite satisfactory, at least, I believe so. No, I can't, I'm sorry. I am late this morning and I shall find six weeks' accumulation at the office. You say you have? Well, then, to-morrow? Five—what? At your house at five? Why, yes, I dare say. Yes, I could do that. Oh, yes, I'll bring everything. Very well, at five. Oh, yes, thank you. That's good. That's good. Very well. Yes. Good-by."

He hung up the instrument, kissed Barbara and set her down.

"Jerwy has to go now, kitten. You be good, won't you? When my trunk comes, tell Kathleen to unpack it and give you the boxes that are in the top tray. Here is the key." He loosened it from his silver ring and folded it carefully into her pink palm. "Don't lose it, babekin. And you'll find some drawn-work aprons for Kathleen in one of the boxes. You give them to her with your love. Good-by, honey-heart. You must stay out of doors a long time to-day." He kissed her, and after getting into his overcoat, kissed her again, took up his hat and kissed her and laughed and left the apartment humming a merry tune.

He was thinking about her all the way down to his office, the noise of the subway, the news of the paper, the speculations as to what he should find piled up on his desk, all these things being unable to supersede her in his mind. For he was a lonely man, and his love for the child was so mingled with his hunger for love that he sometimes confused the two.

The overcrowded, overhurried, over-noisy street into which he rose from the depths of the subway, smote his senses with its familiarity. It seemed, as he became one of the rude, self-

seeking stream of human beings elbowing one another ruthlessly in their eagerness to save two seconds here and a half second there, as if he had never been away. And he remembered with a smile the inhabitants of Powder Horn Hill, among whom he had recently spent so much of his Eastern-born energy. A vision of the little handful of wooden houses in their deep dust setting for an instant blotted out the towering, granite buildings that made a sunless cañon of the street. He saw the range of hills, the shakly tin automobiles at the frame station, the furry nags deep in the powdery road, the loafing men leaning lazily against whatever support was nearest. The remembered comment of a fellow traveler, "These people look as if they had even stopped taking quinine!" made Ogden smile again as a passer-by, who evidently needed no tonic, shouldered roughly past him bringing him somewhat sharply out of his reminiscent mood.

He walked on more rapidly and turned into the building where his offices were. The starter at the elevators nodded a careless welcome.

"Back again, Mr. Ogden? Express elevator, no stops below the eleventh floor." The man turned away as the car closed, and Ogden felt himself definitely reenrolled among the city's workers.

As his work had increased, so had his rooms and assistants. He was modestly proud of his offices, all of a dull brown with smooth, brass fittings. He had struck a satisfactory note between simple, businesslike necessity and more modern luxury. When he opened an inner door and came to a stand on the threshold, three brisk young men, coatless, came forward to greet him pleasantly. Ogden had a gift for selecting and handling men.

"I'll just look over the stuff on my desk and come back," he said as he

shook hands with the last one. "You got that matter off to Bernstein, Carey?"

"Oh, yes, sir. Mr. Burgess telephoned just before you came in—he'll call up again in half an hour."

"Burgess? What does he want?"

"They've struck bad sand in that Glenford excavation. He says the concrete foundation can't go on till you've made changes."

"Oh, all right. Put him on my wire when he calls up. I'll have to go to Glenford probably."

Carey followed him into his private office, and unlocked the desk, pushing up the roll top and laying the key down in token of his surrender of guardianship.

"How did the Powder Horn Hill matter come on, sir?"

Ogden grinned.

"Say, I don't wonder Prentice and Coover felt stumped," he said. "By George, the first look at that mine almost brought tears to my eyes." He swung his chair about to bring himself face to face with the papers laid in methodical trays upon the desk. "It was costing Greggs two cents an ounce more than the ore was worth to get it out and down the mountain. I'm to see Dorpoint at five to-day—up at his house. Find out where it is, Carey."

CHAPTER II.

At five o'clock, with the promptitude of a man who knows the value of a half hour, Ogden stood on the steps of Adam Dorpoint's house in East Forty-ninth Street. As he waited to be admitted, he could not but remark the unsuitability of the place for the man himself. For it was one of the ultra-modern houses, wearing a mask of white stone, a wrought-iron-and-glass entrance almost at street level, box trees in copper tubs at either side and extravagantly fragile lace screens in the

small-paned windows. And he remembered Dorpoint, whom he had seen but twice, at his office and at luncheon, as a rugged, plain sort of man, not in the least rough, but bearing overt evidence of conscientious sandpapering. He had come from the West, Ogden knew, not so many years ago, when his daughter, who was now married, had been in the finishing-school stage. Some one had told him this at the luncheon. It meant that Dorpoint had been in Manhattan some ten years, and Ogden wondered if he had even in that time become accustomed to his surroundings.

Certainly he was sure the servant who ushered him into the reception room could have given his master points on how to wear a tail coat. There was a lean elegance about him that Dorpoint would never attain. As a matter of fact, Dorpoint was this very man's despair, since he was valet as well as houseman, for although Dorpoint submitted twice a day to being dressed according to the most subtle dictates of fashion, he never appeared to that advantage. The moment his correct garments were put upon his patient person, they assumed a negligent appearance of being badly cut, as if they defied any tailor to smarten him. It gave him not the slightest concern. He permitted the diurnal embellishment only because he had never neglected any detail of his obligations in whatsoever enterprise he was engaged. He was also a man reared in an atmosphere where value and cost were severely evened, who having paid for a thing expected to get it. If he paid a tailor and a valet to dress him, and he was not dressed, the disgrace was theirs.

All this was nothing to Ogden. To him Dorpoint was a man who had commanded his services, and he was here to lay his labor upon the table. He did not care whether Dorpoint fitted into his surroundings or not. He sat with his portfolio on his knees in the recep-

tion room without knowing in the least whether it was crimson or gold or both, though there seemed to be a good deal of something, until Gresham returned to ask him to step upstairs to the library. He followed the man up two flights of softly carpeted stairway, past the floor of the drawing-room and dining room and music room, into the more intimate arrangement of the master's personal apartments. Gresham drew back a hanging of Venetian leather and Ogden passed him and went in.

The room looked aggressively comfortable as if its warmth and light were a challenge to the gray and chill evening that was closing in upon the windows.

Adam Dorpoint, even as he rose, at the big Florentine table that stood between the two of them, kept one finger on the map he had been studying, and stretched the other hand forward in greeting.

He was not a tall man, but for all that a commanding personality. His round, gray-blue eyes were as sharply disconcerting as a bird's—he had never, it would seem, labored under the conviction that he could see more clearly with his eyes half shut. The nose between these eyes was straight, but not by any means delicate, being rather thick than otherwise, a nose that with the wide, close-closing mouth beneath it spelled stubborn determination and great capacity of achievement. He was smooth shaven, and roughly gray haired, and his irreproachable clothes hung loosely upon his bony frame. The hands, so prominent in his posture at the moment, were very large and square and, although they were kept in these days as scrupulously perfected as the hands of an idler, the wide finger tips made eloquent announcement of long, hard, and successful work.

"I was just going over the ground," he said pleasantly. "You are prompt—I like that. I got home only ten min-

utes ago myself, and it took me some time to find the maps and the Prentice-Coover report. I haven't had them out since you went away. I've been very much taken up with other things. Sit down, will you?" He folded the map and laid it aside. "I had almost forgotten where the place was, which will seem odd to you. I dare say you know only too thoroughly."

Ogden felt the kindness in the latter part of the speech. It had rather dashed him to realize how absolutely the matter of Powder Horn Hill had been banished from Dorpoint's mind while his own had been so full of it. He drew a chair nearer the table and laid down his portfolio of papers.

"It did seem a long time," he said. "It was one of the hardest problems I ever tackled." Dorpoint's face dulled. He did not like to hear a man complain of hard work. But it lighted again as Ogden added, while his fingers unfastened the magenta tapes of an envelope: "That's why I enjoyed it so much."

Ogden began sorting his papers.

"Of course you knew it wasn't going to be easy."

Dorpoint smiled.

"Prentice and Coover wouldn't have given it up if it had been easy," he said. He felt stimulated, and alert. To succeed, to gain so much as enough bread to fill his woman's starving mouth, by any but the most rigorously fair means would have cost him a year's sleep. But a battle on open ground with fair weapons woke his blood to life.

Ogden lifted the pile of drawings and pages of calculations, and rising, laid them before Dorpoint in the middle of the table.

"These are in the rough, of course," he said, but in the very act of surrendering them, unexpectedly almost to himself, he laid a heavy hand outspread upon them. Dorpoint's eyes traveled upward and met his.

"I want to say," said Ogden quickly,

almost involuntarily it would seem, "that I am proud of this. It wasn't easy. Other men had said it was impossible. You offered me, Mr. Dorpoint, the best pay I have ever had to go out and see if anything could be done; not to go out and solve the problem, but to give you the best advice of which I was capable even if it was only that you chuck the whole proposition. What I want to say, sir, is that if these plans prove a failure, I won't have you pay me one cent—I won't indeed."

Dorpoint was measuring him with his open, gray-blue eyes. He saw the eager face, full of force, of confidence, of determination, lifted halfway to his, he saw the urgent hand emphatic upon the yielding pile of papers, he felt the vibrating power of the man thrilling across the barrier and touching responsive nerves in his own make-up.

"That's all right," said Dorpoint. "I believe you." He moved the papers a bit uncertainly. The awkwardness of the plain man, who finds himself admiring another man was upon him. "We won't quarrel about that now."

"Anyway, you may think it a cheap boast," said Ogden, with a quick smile.

"You're so sure, eh?"

"I am sure."

"That's all right," said Dorpoint again. Ogden dragged his chair nearer and sat down again. In the brief interval the men had gone far toward friendship.

The servant entered while Ogden had barely begun his explanation of his plan which began radically enough, it must be said, with a tunnel into the base of the mountain. Dorpoint was so struck with the entire change of base that the servant near them had to repeat his question before his master heard him.

"Scotch rye and biscuits—anything else, sir?"

"No," said Dorpoint, "nothing." He half roused, then, from his contemplation of the drawing of the old opening

of Powder Horn Hill, to add: "See that we are not disturbed. Not for any reason. Keep dinner waiting for us until I ring." Gresham bowed and withdrew, and Ogden had a fleeting vision of a sleepy and disappointed Barbara being borne mournfully to bed. Nothing had been said about dinner over the telephone, but it was evident that Dorpoint expected him to remain, evident that his larger sense of hospitality had considered it unnecessary to enlarge upon this point.

Ogden went on explaining and interpreting, Dorpoint following every word and motion. The mine had baffled its previous exploiters and could be bought for a song. Nobody disputed the value and quantity of the ore—it was its devilishly ingenious inaccessibility that sapped the pockets of its owner.

He was favorably impressed with Ogden's plans, as he was with the man himself. He had seen men of this stamp before and they were the successful. "Out there," where he had grown up and begun the life struggle that had landed him in New York, a power in a great city of power, men did not disappear and leave no record, as they are so confidently believed to do by many readers of Western fiction. They frequently appeared shorn of any remote vestige of a past, but they either made good in his horizon or they didn't, and he had not watched men for nothing.

Many there were with brains and the ability to use them, who lacked the gift of application which he called "stick-tight-to-it-iveness." He thought Ogden had all these commendatory qualities, as indeed he had. Perhaps, he thought, this young man, for with all the gray at his temples he was barely thirty-three or four, was the one who would put the vanquished graybeards to shame. Perhaps he had hit, by a lucky accident, upon the man who could make a successful working proposition of Powder Horn Hill, the mine that had become a

byword in its vicinity, and was associated in the minds of men with the gold they knew existed in sea water.

For one hour they were at it, hammer and tongs, both very much wrinkled as to the brows, both very much awake as to the eyes. Dorpoint knew himself on these grounds. He was no novice at handling the terms Ogden flung at him—he had begun by handling a pick and had not forgotten it. Neither one lost a word of the other's. Dorpoint's questions met their mates in Ogden's answers.

The older man began to breathe a bit faster. It was an almost boyish pleasure he took in the solving of this conundrum, he who had so many more important matters on his mind.

And yet the plan looked so comparatively simple, once one had seen it, that it seemed incredible no one had thought of it, attempted it, and failed in it before. A million more or less was excitement in its way, but there was more in this, more of what Dorpoint considered fun. He was reaching for his mild whisky and soda without removing his eyes from Ogden's fingers tracing the transverse cut across the shaft, when he became dimly aware of a presence at the door. His eyes lifted, and he frowned.

"I said I was not to be disturbed," he said sharply. Ogden, interrupted, straightened and turned. The lean and elegant valet was there, looking vastly ill at ease and, at the same time, somehow confident of his excusal.

"I am sorry, sir. I thought it best to let you know at once in case you wished to change any orders, sir."

"Well?"

"Mrs. England has just come in, sir, and gone upstairs to her old rooms. She said her maid would be here shortly with her luggage and for me to direct her where to go, being a new maid and unacquainted with the house."

Dorpoint, as this information was be-

ing delivered, had unconsciously permitted his look of impatience to become one of anxious perplexity. The servant stood at the door, divided between satisfaction and curiosity.

Ogden stepped back.

"I will go, Mr. Dorpoint," he said quickly. "We can finish this at any time convenient to you."

For all his natural quickness of wit, Dorpoint seemed quite at a loss. His face was dull with the unbeautiful pallor of middle age. He seemed to sit more heavily in his chair.

"Did my daughter give you any message for me?" he asked.

"Mrs. England asked me to say she had no wish to disturb you, sir, but would come down when you were at liberty."

Ogden stepped definitely toward the door.

"I'll run in another time," he said pleasantly.

Dorpoint rose slowly, and then suddenly became more alert.

"No, look here, Ogden, I expected you to stay to dinner. I want to finish this thing to-night. My daughter will understand perfectly. She's quite unexpected. I dare say Mr. England has been called out of town and she was lonely."

Ogden smiled.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I'll not stay. Mrs. England has undoubtedly a natural desire to have you all to herself."

Dorpoint was indeed vaguely aware that Genevra had some motive in coming to the house, which could scarcely include Ogden. But he frowned.

"If you could," he said slowly, "come back after dinner, and forgive the inhospitality for once? I do want to get this matter thoroughly finished."

"I could certainly. I did not expect to remain—you see I am not dressed. I'll come back—say, at ten?"

"That's capital," said Dorpoint.

"Sorry about dinner," he murmured, "but another time."

"Certainly, certainly." Ogden brushed the matter aside. As he nodded, smiling, and went out, he heard Dorpoint's voice saying with a shade of anxiety:

"Tell Mrs. England that I can see her at once."

Left alone, Adam Dorpoint remained standing, staring at the door, and his frown deepened. That his daughter should have come thus unexpectedly, bringing her maid and her luggage, puzzled him. It did more than that. It woke a fear in him that he had long tried to keep dormant, a fear he had but barely permitted himself to put into words since her marriage. God knows he had voiced it fervently and to her before then, but on that day he had lulled it to a restless sleep and had forced himself to hope for better things.

Even now, he said to himself, she might have come for any simple reason. He said it so often to himself before she came down to the study, that he realized how strong the fear had always been. He said it no more when she came into the room, for as he put out his arms to her, she crept into them like a stricken child and clung to the lapels of his coat, her face hidden on his breast.

"Well, girlie, well," he said tenderly, patting her shoulder with his great hand that had always been so gentle to her. "Come to pay your old dad a visit, eh?" There was an ache in his throat as he felt her tremble. "If you had sent me word, my dear, I would have had things furnished up a bit for you. Find your old rooms about the same? Well, well."

She released him suddenly, walked away to his desk, and stood looking with unseeing eyes at the gray-blue papers that covered it. Dorpoint knew his women—he had known his wife, and better did he know his daughter, much of whose character, and all of whose training was his own. And something

in her attitude as she stood struggling for composure made his big hands grip themselves into fists, relax and close again. She did not need to cry for him to know how heavy was her heart with tears. He waited, knowing she would tell him what there was to tell, so soon as she was able, and hoping that would not be long.

When she turned at last and came back to him, her face was quite calm.

"Dad," she said, putting one hand on her breast, "I have come home for good." Her eyes looked up into his own. "You were right, dad, and I was wrong."

Dorpoint put one arm about her and drew her shoulder close to his. He held her so a moment, and then put her into a great leather chair near which they were standing. He bent and kissed her hair.

"You did quite right to come to me," he said kindly. "Your old dad isn't here for much else than to take care of you. He's been doing it a long time, and he's not likely to quit." He patted her shoulder and walked around in front of her. "Whatever it is, Genevra—and I hope it's nothing very bad—we will do the best we can about it together." He considered her gravely for a moment. "You're very thin, girlie," he said.

She flushed, but did not answer. He pushed a chair nearer, to face her, and sat down, taking out his cigar case.

"You don't object?"

She smiled a bit wearily and moved her hand.

"It's better tobacco than you were brought up to endure, my dear," he said pleasantly, but the end of the cigar came off in a vicious bite. He reached over to his table for a match, lighted it, and drew its ignition toward the tobacco with a series of deep inhalations. Then, suddenly, he rose, and pouring some whisky and water into a glass, held it toward her.

"Drink it," he said.

She shrank away with a shudder.

"I can't bear it—the smell—the very sight of it."

Dorpoint scowled suddenly into the glass. But again he held it toward her.

"Drink it, girlie. Your old dad's the doctor. It's a small dose." She took it from his hand with reluctant obedience. "I'll count for you," said Dorpoint. "One, two—three!"

As she hastily wiped her lips, he set the glass down again, resumed his place before her, watching her. He looked at the hand that passed her handkerchief across her mouth—it was shaped just as Mary's had been before the long, hard years had altered it. It was whiter than Mary's had ever been, but it had the same flexible fingers and the same generous palm. He had watched the hand grow from a tiny absurdity that reached for his beard—he had worn a beard in those days—to the long, sweet, womanly bearer of a wedding ring. The ring itself was visible upon her hand now. He had seen it—with what reluctance!—put upon that finger a year ago. She had worn other rings, then, set with all the diamonds he had been able to give Mary in years gone by and some others that since he had bestowed in her name upon their daughter. But she was wearing none of these now, just the plain, gold band. He kept his eyes upon it as he spoke to her.

"I know you too well, Geneva, and you know me too well, for either of us to postpone going into this matter. There's not much procrastination in either of us. I will go as gently as I can. I can't promise much, for I am clumsy and even a less awkward hand could hurt you now. But if I do hurt, girlie, you will remember that I don't mean to do it, won't you?"

"Of course, dear," she said bravely.

He looked at her a moment, and then rose, walked the length of the room. At that distance, he turned and blurted it out.

"One thing I must ask at the very outset. Has England anything to say against you?"

Her head went up with a jerk.

"No," she said.

Dorpoint came back to her quickly.

"Don't be short with your old dad, honey child," he said. "It was only a matter of form and I wanted to get it over with." He patted her shoulder again and took a long breath through his cigar. He seemed more at ease. His eyes, staring into the tapestry that covered one end of the room, had a placidity which heretofore they somewhat lacked. "You must not feel that I doubted you, Geneva, because of that question. But wrong is possible to all of us. I would have stood by you anyway, dear—you know that. It's a poor love that can live only on perfection—it's not love at all. But I am glad you can say that, even though I knew you could. It would have broken my heart, Geneva. We have never done a man a wrong, and we never will. We have never been part of anything disgraceful and we never will." The man's deepest faith, the determination on which he had founded his whole life, spoke in the words. "That is dearer to me—dearer even than you are." He touched her hair gently. "It makes things much simpler and easier, my girl, always to have but one thing to do."

He squared his shoulders a little as he went back to his chair.

"Has England been unkind to you?" he asked.

A faint smile came to her lips. She rose and walked toward the fireplace.

"Unkind," she repeated, as she stood looking down into the red coals. "I am not a house cat, or a canary," she said half absently. Unconsciously she twisted her wedding ring upon her finger. Dorpoint noticed the gesture. He drew a volume of smoke into his mouth, and blew it forth upon the air in a thin, gray stream.

"Has he been untrue to you?" he said at last.

"Untrue, untrue!" she echoed. "You mean by that, as all men do, a physical unfaith?" To his utter amazement she flamed into vehemence. "Is that a man's whole idea of marriage? Is a woman to lose all respect, all love for a man and then go on in perfect contentment because he still finds her more attractive than other women? What is it to her after he has made her loathe him? What should a woman care for the kisses of a cad?"

Dorpoint stared at the blazing crudity of her outburst. Little polish as he might have, he had great reserve. She stood over him, his own flesh and blood, tall and accusatory. Then suddenly she seemed to relax from head to foot into her old weariness.

"Why should I say these things to you? You might have come to me a year ago with the question, what does a woman care for a cad? You foresaw all this—why didn't you force me to see? Why didn't you chain me up? Why didn't you do something? You let me give myself to this man—to belong to him, to belong to him!" Then suddenly she was on her knees beside him, her face hidden on his arm. "Oh, honey dad, forgive me! I am the only one to blame. You did everything you could—I know it well enough." He had thrown away the cigar and now put his arm about her to lift her, but she resisted gently, and his hand lingered with a brooding gentleness upon her soft, thick hair.

"I don't blame you, my dear, for feeling now that I ought to have forbidden the marriage. But I should have lost you completely if I had. You know in your heart you would have married him just the same. It is a queer thing, but you knew in your heart, too, he was not all he should have been. How do I know that? Because I have heard you try to whiten him with poor little white

lies. He didn't come up to your standards. You know it."

She turned her head a little on his knee and sighed.

"I know it. Yet I went ahead. I can't understand it now."

"Well," said Dorpoint slowly, "maybe it had to be that way. One thing is sure, we can't undo it now. But we'll see if we can't do better with the future. I want to hear what you have to say, Genevra, but before you begin I must tell you this: You are Frederic's wife and that is a relationship with which I will not interfere. Understand me," he added, as he felt her move to interrupt him, "you may live with me as long as both of us are left on earth, and if you do not wish to see Frederic again you have only to say so. But you must know and he must know that the situation is of your making, yours and his. I am simply backing you in this as I would in anything—anything honorable. Your trouble with him is your trouble, but by the living Jingo," he burst out suddenly, unable longer to maintain his dispassionate tone, "I have my own scores against him, too. When I settled your income on you, I didn't intend that big stiff to sit back with his feet on the fender and live on it. He can hustle now, by God! You can close your house or sell it or do as you please with it; and he can take off his slippers and get into a pair o' shoes and hunt for a job! To think of Homans and me—both of us!—taken in by that liar!"

"I don't know what you mean," she said.

"I'll explain later. Found out it was a lie only two months ago. What do you want to do about the house?"

"Well, it stands in his name——"

"The devil it does! Homans and I made out the deed together."

"I made it over to him a few weeks after we were married. He said it

would make it easier for him to attend to the taxes and things."

"Great Gilead!" said Dorpoint softly. Then he laughed, a short laugh, and his teeth clicked together. "If any one had told me when I struck my first stuff out there in White Hill that I was going to make my pile so as to give a fancy pouter pigeon twenty thousand a year and an eighty-thousand-dollar house to live in—I—" He stopped and addressed her again. "Why, Geneva, you shouldn't have done that. Not that it matters now. He'll deed it back." He looked grimly at the window a moment. "Suppose you just go ahead and tell me the rest of it. And make it as short as you can, girlie. I guess I can imagine a good deal of it."

"It's not a thrilling story," said the girl slowly. "Just a collection of sordid pettinesses. But they make the situation a great deal more irremediable than if he had committed a big sin."

"You're very modern, my dear," said Dorpoint mildly.

"The world has been forgiving big sins since creation," she retorted.

"It hasn't always admitted it so frankly," he said. "Go on."

"I can't help despising a worthless man any more than you can, dad. And I won't live with him. It began as soon as we came back from Scotland. He wanted some money."

"So soon? He got rid of that twelve thousand he had in the bank pretty quick. It was that money he fooled us with, Homans and me. Showed the letters from the lawyers of that aunt of his, paying him as per instructions the yearly rent of that shoe factory she owns. Showed us a copy of her will leaving him that income for life." He spoke restlessly and with a weary self-contempt.

"He never told you it was on condition that he always lived with her?"

"You bet he didn't. Homans found

it out when she died two months ago and her subsequent will was probated. Not a red for F. E.!"

"He told me about it when we married. She held it open to include me, but he said he could not ask me to sacrifice myself, giving up all my friends and going so far away from you."

"Indeed!" Dorpoint said faintly.

She turned on him sharply.

"Don't think I didn't know it was wrong. But somehow he was always so plausible!"

"Well, I guess he is," agreed Dorpoint. "He had a lot of debts, I dare say?"

"Yes. They began to press him after we were married. So he paid them—credit him with that."

"Great Gilead! Who wouldn't with a rich wife?"

She moved a little, and he bent over her.

"Forgive me, girlie," he said more gently.

She faintly smiled at him and then grew grave again as she went on with her slow story.

"He wanted me to be sure and keep an account of what I advanced him—at first. Then, after a while, we silently left off the pretense of its being a loan. And he began to be terribly extravagant—to go beyond even what I could give him. And, dad, I never knew he drank so much! It—it is hard for me to—to tell you these things. They hurt me."

"Just forget me," he said softly.

"He made an arrangement to get my quarterly payments in advance," she went on, after a long, hard breath. "I didn't quite understand it, but he said all business houses did it—something about a discount."

"You bet," said Dorpoint between his teeth.

"It made me ashamed somehow. And he said if I felt uncomfortable about it he would not ask me to manage it. So he had me give instructions to honor

his signature at the bank in place of mine."

"Why," he broke in, forgetting that he was to have remained a passive listener, "why in the name of sense didn't you refuse?"

"I had given up," she answered simply. "Dad, there was no use talking to him. We spoke a different language." She waited a moment, looking up at his set face till he nodded shortly to her to go on.

"Then he told me he would manage the household accounts. He thought it better that he should pay the servants and all that. He said it made no difference between us, but the world was full of small minds, and it hurt his pride."

"Yah!" grunted Dorpoint inelegantly.

She was silent again for some moments.

"Perhaps you can imagine what it meant to go on living with him after I began to despise him. I did it as long as I could. As long as I could." She felt his hand close over hers, and an ache in her throat made her pause.

"Let's cut it a bit short," he said at last, somewhat unsteadily.

"Then things began to get worse, everything. And I found he was not paying any bills at all. The servants had not had their wages. I made out some checks myself, and they came back marked 'Insufficient funds.'"

Dorpoint sat up and ran his finger around in his collar.

"When I sent for him, he came in as jauntily as you please. He called it a 'temporary embarrassment.' You can imagine what he suggested—'a bit of help' from you. I refused flatly. I waited to hear him suggest borrowing from some one else, but he didn't."

"Nothing doing," muttered Dorpoint.

"He did not dare mortgage the house, you see, because of you. He only wanted the deed in his name for the feel of the thing. Well, he did nothing. And one day I was served with some

papers, in a suit—the grocer's. If it hadn't been for that he would have gone calmly on, but that had to be met. He gave me a long dissertation on 'borrowing on sufficient security.' It sounded like a national bond issue, but what he meant was taking my jewels to a pawnshop."

"Damnation!" roared Dorpoint, getting to his feet, regardless of her leaning upon him. "Is there much more of this?"

"No. I gave him my jewel case, open. And the bills were paid, I suppose. But I hated him, and to-day I left him. He behaved like a maniac, sobbing and flinging his arms about and talking of suicide."

"Are you through?"

"Yes," she said. "There's a lot more of it, but it's all like that."

"You have finished?"

"Yes," she repeated. And rose.

"Then go out," said Dorpoint. "Go out at once. I am going to say things!" He flung himself into the chair before the desk and ground his open palms upon its surface with the sound of a great pressure.

CHAPTER III.

It was quite nine o'clock before Dorpoint and his daughter sat down to dinner. He had been somewhat apprehensive of seeing some traces of emotion about her, reddened lids, perhaps. He was an old-fashioned man who thought women cried as a matter of course. But it rather disconcerted him, even while it pleased him, when she met him calmly, radiantly pretty in her simple evening frock, and tucked her hand under his elbow in her usual chummy fashion.

"It seems as if I'd never been away," she said as they went in to the dining room together, and she looked about the room as he put her into her chair. "Except that I see Bellinger has at last found the old wine cupboard we wanted, I can't see any change. Except in you

and me," she added, with a faint smile. "And I dare say there's precious little change in you."

"I'm—let me see—a whole year older," said Dorpoint, taking his place opposite. "And I feel it."

She looked at him a bit anxiously.

"Of course, you have been over-doing," she said. "You always did, do, and will. Really, daddy, I don't see why you don't stop. Surely you have more money now than we can ever spend. Let's shut up shop and travel."

Dorpoint shook his head.

"Women always think all one has to do is to lock the office door," he grunted, smiling. "What about the people who expect me to see them through, my associates, my stockholders, to say nothing of my 'army,' as you used to call it?"

"Well, after all," she laughed, "you are not a philanthropist."

"God forbid!" said Dorpoint. "I expressed myself badly if I gave you the impression that I was in business for charity's sake. But it does give one pause to think of retiring. I like to see the wheels go round. I don't want to read a sort of premature obituary notice of myself in the Wall Street columns."

"You could come back," she suggested.

"Oh, I'll take a holiday, some time," he agreed pleasantly. "I'd like to go to Wales. Homans wants to go—said the other day he knew a place over there. The name of it certainly sounded as if I could never find it by myself. How would that suit you? Two old fogies! You could run around to more exciting places. It's rest I want. Doctor Thurlow charged me twenty dollars to tell me so."

The anxiety in her eyes returned, but she did not speak. The admission that he had been to see a physician had slipped from him unconsciously, she knew, knowing his stubborn dislike of

doctoring. Perhaps her home-coming had been providential. She continued to eat her dinner without any thought for its excellence.

"After I get my present jobs wound up," said Dorpoint, half to himself.

"But 'present jobs' always dovetail into others," she protested. "You can't expect to have everything wind up neatly, all at the same time."

He laughed.

"Never saw a woman who didn't argue both ways. But no matter. We'll arrange it somehow."

"What's the latest burden?" she asked, after a pause. "I saw you—let me see, last Friday? It was a railroad, wasn't it, somewhere in the South?"

"That notion came to nothing, thank God. It was a harebrained scheme at best. Idea of Arliss'. No, I can't pretend to be heavily burdened just now. In fact, I could get away rather easily. There's only this Powder Horn Hill affair I'd like to see fairly on its way." He glanced at the clock with a muttered exclamation. "Reminds me," he said, "I've got a man coming at ten."

"It's ten now. And you shall have your coffee in peace!" she ordained. "What's he coming for at this time of night? Who is it?"

"It's about the Powder Horn Mine. Chap I sent out to see whether it was worth buying for nothing. Ogden—nice fellow."

"I hope he's not tiresomely prompt," she said as the butler set before her the silver of the coffee service.

"It's a good habit," demurred Dorpoint. "I wanted to finish the preliminaries to-night. We were at it hammer and tongs when you came." He looked up at her as the servant left the room. "You don't—you don't think Frederic is likely to come to-night, do you? It's quite late and—"

"I don't think there's the slightest chance of it," said Genevra amiably. "He was enjoying his theatrics quite

too much to cut them short. There's ten striking now."

"Mr. Ogden, sir," said Gresham, at the door.

Genevra leaned back in her chair, laughing.

"He's detestable," she said. "Have him up, dad, for some coffee and a cigar. I won't have you rushing off without your second cup."

"Bring Mr. Ogden in here," said Dorpoint, rising. He went to the door of the dining room and welcomed his guest there. Genevra heard a remarkably pleasant voice saying:

"I am afraid I'm too early, after all."

"You are as prompt as a ghost," she declared impulsively, turning about in her chair to look at him. "My father was sure you would be here at ten, but to come in on the middle stroke of the hour is 'cutting it far too fine.'"

"My daughter, Mrs. England," murmured Dorpoint perfunctorily.

Ogden came forward, smiling. She made a gracious picture, half turned in her chair, the soft light falling on her red-brown hair and across her white shoulder, as she held out her hand to him. Dorpoint, even in the preoccupation of the moment, noticed its ringless condition and his fingers twitched. He wondered, in the childish panic of a simple, overproud man, if his guest would think it strange to see his daughter dressed for dinner without a single jewel.

Ogden had taken the hand in a friendly fashion that matched her own. Truly the ways of the second generation were far removed from the first. Dorpoint, under similar circumstances, would have infused an unavoidable stiffness into the meeting. These younger people, however, might have met a dozen times before.

"Do you know, I was thinking the last time I crossed the Atlantic about ghosts," said Ogden, as he dropped into the chair Gresham drew out for him.

"How beastly it would be to be a ghost on a liner, you know. Fancy at midnight being all ready to appear, blue light, hollow groan, and all the rest of it, and then to have the clock set back to half past eleven! To be left there with one's mouth open, feeling such a fool."

"To a person of your habits," retorted Genevra, "I should think it would be vastly more irritating to be going the other way and to find at the very instant of your appearance that you were half an hour late."

He laughed, as he accepted a cigar from the humidior Dorpoint held toward him.

"I'm willing to wager you are prompt yourself, Mrs. England," he said.

"So she is," said Dorpoint, looking vaguely surprised at this penetration. "You'll take some coffee?"

"Thank you, no."

"It was I who insisted you should not deprive my father of his second cup."

"You are a lucky man, Mr. Dorpoint. My daughter has but two prime objects in life; one is to see that I get up in the morning, the other that I do not have a second cup of coffee to keep me up at night."

Genevra laughed, but he saw them both look at him with a new interest.

"I didn't know you were married," said Dorpoint.

"My wife is dead," said Ogden gently. And he added quickly, to forestall the expression of his host's contrition: "I always hope my daughter will grow up to be more lenient toward me. She is only four now."

"And a martinet?" asked Genevra. "I am a shackled slave," he said, smiling.

"I adore baby girls," said Genevra. "Won't you bring her to see me?"

Ogden, touched in the quick of his heart, looked at her with a new friendliness.

"You are very good." He glanced at Dorpoint and back at her, seeing no displeasure in his face at the prospect of admitting so recent a stranger on a new footing. "May I? She's a social little thing. And I have to be away from her a good deal. We have a treasure of an Irish woman who takes care of us both, but even so——" He caught himself up.

Genevra was watching him curiously.

"What is it?"

He laughed, and colored.

"Well, it sounded as if I were going to trespass on your invitation," he said. "I won't do that. But I will bring her to see you. When may I?"

"To-morrow," she said promptly.

Dorpoint chuckled.

"Don't you worry about trespassing," said he. "I've had to restrain Genevra ever since she was knee-high to a pint of cider, or I should have been the vicarious guardian of every adoptable child in the country."

Genevra laughed a little, as she rose from her place.

"Never you mind him, Mr. Ogden, I won't kidnap her, much as I shall probably want to. Bring her any time you can to-morrow. I—I shall not be going out." She nodded and smiled. "Now I'll leave you to go on with your business."

She turned away, and wandered aimlessly across the room to look at the old wine cooler underneath the Sheraton sideboard. Ogden, standing in his place, found himself wishing with some vehemence that she would not leave the room. Her presence seemed to fill him with a grateful warmth; there was something so generously pretty about her, the abundance of her hair, the brightness of her eyes, the soft scarlet of her mouth, the perfection of her throat and breast. She was so alive, so glowing, so kind. Out of all proportion to the length of their acquaintance was his chagrin when she passed

2—Ains.

out, through another curtained doorway into the music room, and even as she seated herself at the piano he surprised himself by the strength of his longing to follow her.

He almost started as Dorpoint laid a hand on his shoulder. His host had left the head of the table, as his orderly mind took up once more the Powder Horn Hill matter exactly where they had left it, and talking as he walked, gathered Ogden into the trend of both activities with this absent touch.

"We can manage far better with the drawings before us," he was saying, as Ogden came to himself.

"Certainly—yes," agreed Ogden, in confusion. A vagrant bit of "*Bohème*" was stealing softly about them. Indeed, he must be starved for some music, he told himself brusquely, that a dreamily wandering melody could draw his senses a-trickling out at the end of his fingers. He pulled himself together sharply, following Dorpoint to the stairs and, as they went upward to the library, he fancied he could hear a small, derisive voice repeating the familiar words:

"Wake up, Jerwy, wake up!"

CHAPTER IV.

If Ogden's memory did not play him false, and nobody who knew him would believe that it did, he had read in some wasted hours of his youth certain fiction dealing with the gentle art of falling in love, and he knew it to be a fact that plausible authors had given him to understand it could be done unconsciously. Philemon might feel his heart leap and glow at the sight of maiden Baucis, stammer, blush, and tremble and be any number of kinds of pitiful idiot, and yet walk the earth wondering what was the matter with him. Of course he found out in the end—possibly because the more astute Baucis pretended to sprain an ankle and fainted gracefully into his silly arms—but before that

happened he had to consider many alternatives, early decline or some such fuddle-headed notion. Now Ogden had not stammered or exhibited any other imbecility, and yet he had fallen in love at first sight completely and resoundingly, and he knew it.

It was distinctly a delicious sensation, at the first, if rather confused and incoherent, exhilarating and pleasurable without any sound reason. As to a man who has looked upon wine when it was red, the world seemed a gracious place of laughing friendliness, delectable, luxurious, and of thrilling possibilities.

There was no time yet for the heartache that would come later. Resolutely he refused even to think of it. It would come soon enough. Sleep, of course, was out of the question, not so much because impossible as that he wanted to stay awake with the new miracle, and half thought, like Hafiz, that all the world was sitting up with him.

The morning light meant only the dawn of a day when he should see her again, the advent of Barbara was welcomed beyond even the starved enthusiasm of the day before as an opportunity to tell her that she was to have the inestimable privilege of beholding the most lovely lady in the world; Kathleen's dependability appreciated only as it meant no delays in the plan of seeking her, and the decision reached at the office that he must go to Glenford anaesthetized solely because it would mean perhaps a week of outer darkness.

He worked feverishly during the morning to be able to leave his office at three, to hold this happiness while yet he could, conscious of the insidious, slow approach of the heartache that, creeping ever nearer, would suddenly overwhelm him and drag him down to moods unbearable. Yes, it would come soon enough.

Barbara was ready for him at half past three—befflounced and ribboned,

and dancing like his own heart. Just give him one minute to change from office togs, while Kathleen called a taxicab, one minute at a florist's for a big bunch of violets for Barbara to give her, one minute to drive past all the speed laws of humanity—and there they were!

Genevra was ready for them, too, admitting them so like the loveliest woman in the world, into her own music room instead of receiving them more formally, with pleasant, smiling words for Jeremy and just the right amount of readiness in helping to remove a little white fur coat and cap, and such a delightful lack of delay in establishing herself and Barbara side by side on a little sofa behind—well, such a tea table! Heavens, such chocolate, such tea and lemon, such red lips and laughter, such lettuce sandwiches and bright eyes and cakes and dainty hands and whipped cream and filmy laces!

Never was there such a meeting, with so little *gêne*. Not a bit of grown-up stuff about it, not any of that sickening effort to put a child at ease. Barbara, her eyes wide and laughing, did not have to stare at the lovely lady to know she was the right sort. Here was one who did not ask how old you were, nor what your name was; who let you help yourself to cake and took a lot herself, who had a doll's house of her own, mind you, and loved it; one, also, who knew you had wiped your fingers like a lady before you wandered around the pretty room, to touch the little silver toys on tables that were not as high as one's nose; one who didn't fidget when you were out of sight, bent on delightful exploration, but went on laughing and talking to a laughing and talking Jerwy and not saying one single thing you couldn't understand.

For Jerry was laughing and talking, doing both, it seemed to him, with the frantic calm of a brave man facing death. It was coming ever nearer, that pain from which his heart shrank, quiv-

ered, and beat on again at a rapid gallop like a fugitive. At times, he scarcely knew what he was saying, but watching her pretty, brightly smiling face, he talked literally against time, and saw nothing in her look to accuse him of incoherence or banality. He found Barbara, returned from hazardous pilgrimages in *terra incognita*, leaning against his knee, her face turned like his toward the loveliest lady, until on a sudden as he heard his voice saying, "And so I must go to Glenford," she twisted about to stare up at him with a reproachful, "Oh!"

"But you've only just come home," protested Genevra, in the very words that framed themselves in Barbara's eyes.

"I know," said Ogden. And the first sharp pang smote him fairly.

The two large tears that rose in Barbara's eyes might have been sympathetic, had she known, but they were, like most tears, sincerely selfish.

"Going away again!" she cried despairingly.

Ogden's arm went around her.

"Only for a few little, little days," he said gently.

Genevra leaned forward, her sweet face kind with sympathy.

"That's pretty mean, isn't it, Barbara?" she said with a sound appreciation of the hatefulness of business. Barbara nodded speechlessly, her appealing little head bent down. There was a little pause while the loveliest lady's eyes flashed across once at Ogden. "I tell you what let's do," she said gravely. She was not the one to speak with giddy enthusiasm during a horrid moment like this. "You come and stay with me while Jerwy is away."

It was an amazing suggestion. Both her visitors' heads came up with simultaneous jerks to let their eyes behold her, but one of them had hoped to catch her with that "Jerwy" still on her lips.

"You see, there's a room in the doll's house that really ought to be done over, and you could help me so much, picking out the furniture. It would take us nearly a week to do it properly, I think. You see, it's the best bedroom, and I can't decide whether it would be prettier in pink or blue."

"Pink!" said Barbara suddenly, turning about.

"Well, perhaps you're right," said Genevra. "Then you will come and help me?"

Barbara's small face softened and began to smile. Then she quietly left her place and walked over to the loveliest lady, nodding as she went. She had hardly expected it, but she found herself caught up in the two sweet-smelling, lace-draped arms, and submitted to the embrace with a shy gladness.

And here was poor Jerry's heartache with a vengeance. With a leap like that of an enraged panther, it was upon him, tearing and smothering like a very nightmare, and yet in all its pitiless savagery strangely confused with the softness of those round, white arms that held his little child. His face went white in the sudden agony, and he got to his feet as a man might stumble in a stifling darkness groping his way toward a gasp of air.

CHAPTER V.

"I had a letter from Frederic today," said Genevra, as she preceded her father into the library that evening after dinner. "I left it here." She picked up a bulky envelope from the table as she spoke. "I thought you might like to see it."

Dorpoint regarded it with a quizzical briefness as he cut the end of a cigar.

"It's a yard wide and I'll bet it's all wool," he said. "If you'll excuse me, my dear, I am a busy man. What in brief does he say?"

"I've no clear idea," she answered listlessly. "It must have taken him hours to write it. It seems to be an elaboration of the rather disjointed remarks he made upon my departure." She laid the letter down and glanced at the clock. "The only definite statement in it that I can recall is that he will come here this evening. Are you going to be at liberty?"

"Why, yes," said Dorpoint without enthusiasm. "But isn't it you he probably wants to see?"

"I dare say," she agreed. "I'm quite willing to see him. If he asks for me, I'll be in the music room and Gresham can fetch me."

Dorpoint sat down heavily, and sighed.

"Poor daddy," said Geneva, and patted his head. "We must get it over with."

"Oh, I want to see him, all right," said he. "I was thinking of having to listen to him."

"Well, it's for the last time," she said consolingly.

Dorpoint rose restlessly, and faced her.

"That's final?"

"Quite."

He stared at her for a moment and then looked at his cigar.

"All right," he said. "I'll send for you, if he wishes it."

"He will," she answered calmly, wandering toward the door. "No third act is complete without a scene between the principals."

"You don't think——"

"He'll make a scene?" She paused a moment to look back at his perturbed face. "Why, that's what he's coming for." She laughed. "Cheer up, dad. He'll get no heroics out of us." And she went out, leaving him walking moodily about.

It was not much later when England came, ushered up to the library by her previous instructions to the lean and

elegant house man, who lingered to set out the inevitable whisky and siphons with more interest in the proceedings than he usually permitted himself to feel, and retired to announce to the other servants that the game, whatever it was, was "on."

England was a tall man, who perhaps had once been spare and well built, but was now growing stout and lazy looking. He had a superficial quality of seeming a handsome man, but there was a lightless destiny in his eyes, and his face lacked the charm of variant expression. His mouth, partially hidden by a close mustache, was weak and sulky, and he had a self-content that amounted to pomposity.

Dorpoint, after greeting him with a short word and a shorter nod, sat down again, intrenched behind his table. Perhaps he prayed for patience as he played with the paper knife, balancing it across his index finger like a child's seesaw.

England, having poured himself a drink at his host's wordless invitation, sat down in one of the easy-chairs—there were no other kind in the room—and looked at Dorpoint without harshness.

"What I want, of course, is to see Geneva," he said. "She has done a most unreasonable thing, in her impulsive way, and one that will inevitably reflect upon her unless it is promptly undone."

Dorpoint glanced up.

"Upon her?"

"And upon me, too, of course, though it was of her that I was thinking. Upon me, too. It is not fair in any way to me. I have done nothing."

"You certainly are right there," said Dorpoint to himself, shifting the paper cutter to the index finger of the other hand. He might, with perfect impunity, have made the remark aloud—England's sense of humor was not ticklish. He would merely have

thought he was finding unexpected agreement.

"You see," said England, "nobody understands Genevra as I do. She has a very peculiar nature, excessively moody and rather selfish."

"Peculiar?" said Dorpoint with another upward glance.

"Well, of course, it's far more common than one could wish," said the younger man regretfully. "With all due deference to you, Genevra's life here has not been of a nature to lessen these tendencies. And it came very hard for her, of course, to adapt herself to the position of the second in authority, having ruled absolute in a home for so many years." He smiled graciously at his father-in-law as he said it. "You have been too indulgent with Genevra, though, of course, it was but natural to expect you would be. But I love her too well to want her to be anything but that noblest woman she can be, and I am not blinded to her faults. It is very silly of her"—he took a sip of the whisky—"to run off like this, in schoolgirl fashion. I have been most devoted and most forbearing, and yet she deserts me in this outlandish fashion as if I had neglected her. It casts a reflection upon me that I have by no means deserved."

Dorpoint shifted noisily in his chair.

"I want to make you understand my position before we go any further," he said bluntly. "This is a very serious matter and it lies between you and Genevra. I did not and shall try not to influence her in any way. There is no need of our ignoring the fact that I was opposed to her marrying you, and that I wish to God she never had. We know that. I used all the influence I could lay my hands on to prevent it. But that's over now. She is Mrs. England, and you and she must decide the rest."

"Very sensible of you, I'm sure," said the other to his whisky and water.

"But," said Dorpoint who, though trying heroically to control his anger, exploded rather startlingly upon the word, "whatever Genevra decides to do, I'm here to back her up. Just you remember that. She knows whether she wants to patch up this rent or not. If she doesn't, you'll never get a needle and thread near it, now mark me."

"Don't speak of it in that way," said England as if the other's bluntness were quite deplorable. "Genevra is, in a rather overwrought condition. She has not been quite like herself of late, has shut herself up most morbidly for about two months, refusing to go out anywhere even to the theater alone with me. She has spent all day in her own room, week in and week out, brooding and sulking, and she has persuaded herself into this melodramatic action, just because she resented the loving restraint I have had, naturally, to put upon her. But Genevra has a very sweet womanly nature *au fond*, and it is to her better self that I shall appeal." He finished his whisky and water and, rising, put his glass back on the tray. Dorpoint, who was again balancing the paper knife, rang the bell that hung near him.

"The original mistake was mine," said England humbly. "I let grave issues be put aside, when they should have been bravely faced because I dreaded her possible childish resentment and the consequent estrangement. I have loved her not wisely."

Dorpoint glanced up in his habitual way, seeming, although he raised his eyes, to keep his look upon the thing within his hands. Gresham was again at the door.

"Tell Mrs. England that I am in the library and that if she wishes to come up—" He returned his gaze to the paper cutter and the Venetian-leather arras fell back into place at the doorway. He was perfectly conscious that England was not at all satisfied with the message.

"She knows you were coming. She will understand," he said.

"But to a servant!" said England testily. Then he remembered that Dorpoint had not always been accustomed to such luxuries of life as servants—and, though it never occurred to him, he might have added sons-in-law.

"It is my servant," said Dorpoint as he balanced the paper cutter. England flung a quick glance at the impassive face and concluded to change the subject by returning to the old one.

"Of course, I must see Genevra to-night," he said. "Already I have allowed the matter to rest for twenty-four hours, because I had a fond hope she would see the cruelty of her action and return to me of her own wish. I believed more of her than it seems I had any right to expect."

Dorpoint shifted in his chair again. Where he came from men did not talk of fond hopes and cruelty. He cleared his throat.

"I have nothing further to say at present, England," he said. "You know my position. If Genevra wishes to speak to you or to listen to you, she has only to come here and she can do it. If she sends word she does not want to come, we will conclude this interview in what my office boy calls a few brief words." He snapped the paper cutter down on the polished surface of the table, and then rose. It was Genevra at the door. England rose, too, and turned to face her. His face was a triumph of reproachful love.

She came in with no more appearance of emotion or nervousness than she might have shown on entering a glove shop. Dorpoint who had been wondering just how she would face the ordeal was vaguely pleased at her control.

"Shall I go? Do you wish it?" he said to her at once.

"Why, no, certainly not," she answered quietly. There was a serenity upon her that amazed him. "How do

you do?" she said to the other man. He had indefinitely come toward her and she just as indefinitely had swerved and avoided him.

"Genevra!" There was a tender reproach in England's voice. He did not do it, but the tone sounded as if he were going to stretch out forgiving arms to her.

"I thought you were going to kiss me," she said in explanation.

England smiled in a forbearing, sarcastic way.

"I suppose I might have done that, even if we are married!" he said. It was rather neat, he thought.

She took the chair opposite her father's at the table, pulling it around to face them both more impartially. Dorpoint was conscious of the fact that Genevra was going to be very "modern."

"No one," she was saying "has any right to kiss me except the person whose kisses I desire. I don't desire yours. I don't want you to touch me."

"Sit down, England," said Dorpoint, resuming his own chair.

"Thank you," said the offended one stiffly. "I think I prefer to stand."

"As you please," said Genevra leaning back. "It is very silly of you to imagine that you are a different person standing up than you are sitting down. For my part, I can't see that it would alter the situation in the least if you lay down on the hearthrug."

"Don't be flippant, Genevra!"

"I should rather be flippant than ponderously insincere," she returned quietly. "Did you ask to see me?"

"I did," said England. "I want you to put an end to this nonsense." He spoke as one might to an irrational child.

"That is exactly what I have done," she said.

"You are my wife," he went on, ignoring her interjection. "You have nothing with which to reproach me.

You cannot fling your responsibilities away as you do an old glove. You know perfectly well that I am utterly devoted to you. I have given up all my outside interests so that I might devote all my time to making you happy. I have scarcely been inside a club since we were married. I have had no desire for any society except your own. I have sacrificed everything to you. And what is the result?"

"That you bore me to death," said Genevra.

England looked at her an instant in silence and then walked away to the window. In a moment he turned and came straight toward her and stood looking at her with an expression that only tears could have intensified.

"Genevra," he said in a wholly different tone, "if I tire you, it is at least my misfortune and not my fault. That is an ungentle thing for you to have said—an ungenerous, an unkind thing. I love you devotedly, and I have tried in my own poor way to show you that I have nothing in the world but you. If I have wearied you with too much devotion, I am sorry. But is it a reason for deserting me?"

"I did not give it as a reason," she answered patiently. "You asked me what was the result of your having made up your mind, apparently, never to leave the house except in my company, and I told you."

The alley proved a cul-de-sac and England retraced his way.

"I have nothing in the world but your love," he repeated. "If you take that away from me—what shall I have to pin my faith to? What shall I believe in, if I cannot put my trust in you? What shall strengthen and uphold me in the struggles of life, but the thought of you?"

In the pause that followed this ringing question, Dorpoint's balancing trick failed signally and the paper cutter came down with a sharp snap upon the

table. He apologetically cleared his throat, shifted his feet, and began the delicate job anew.

Genevra had smiled at the evidence of his appraisal of the eloquence to which they listened. It was very much the same as her own.

"It is quite useless, Frederic, to go on like that," she said. "There isn't a word of sense in what you are saying. You are merely making an emotional appeal to my maternal instinct—and you are not a child and have no right to expect to be treated as one."

"Merely!" he broke in on this word "instinct." "Oh, Genevra, are you going to belittle every beautiful quality of a woman's heart? Are you going to strip yourself of every holy sweetness in which you have been clothed?"

"Nonsense," she said evenly. "There is nothing in life more incapable of sound judgment than that self-sacrificing side of a woman's nature. I see no reason why I should sacrifice myself to you. I must say that any case that has to depend upon sacrifices from others to win its way, seems rather shaky to me. By the way——"

He waited.

"Yes?"

"I was going to ask you, just out of curiosity, what reasons—decided you against killing yourself as you told me that you would?"

England looked rather foolish, but turned the question to his own interest with his usual ingenuity.

"The hope of being able to persuade you of your error, the hope that your better nature would awaken at my appeal and bring you back to my empty arms. Besides, as I thought of it in a calmer moment when the first agony of your act had passed, it seemed the coward's part to leave you just when you most needed me."

"You are disappointing," said she. "I hoped you were going to revive my respect by saying honestly that you

never had the slightest intention of suicide."

Dorpoint, who had lived where men did not infrequently make away with life, personal and otherwise, regretted her harshness.

"Genevra, dear," he said, looking up. It had been on the tip of his tongue to call her Jenny—Jenny she had been in those old days. But she had long since broken him of the habit.

"Don't you be foolish, dad," she said softly, without looking at him.

England had cleverly let part of her remark go by.

"Respect!" he said with the inflection of one who renounces life and liberty. "Do you think you care for my respect, Genevra?"

"Not really," said Genevra. "Of course, I am weak enough to prefer that everybody on earth should think well of me, but I don't know that you particularly make any difference."

"Good God, Genevra, think what you are saying!"

She rested her head against the back of her chair and turned it from side to side with her first exhibition of impatience.

"I am saying what I honestly feel and believe. I wish you would do the same."

"Do you not love me any longer, my wife?" His voice was trembling as he asked the question.

"I do not," said Genevra slowly and with the unmistakable inflection of finality. But sincere and inevitable as the statement was, it brought a remonstrance from both listeners, one a mere theatrical turn of pose, the other a "Really, Genevra," from Dorpoint.

She was alert on the instant.

"There you are!" she said, turning around on her father. "You are influenced now by emotion, not by reason. You would have to acknowledge me an idiot if I did admire him without finding something in him to admire—and

yet you protest when I am honest enough to say that I do neither. He doesn't really love me, either."

England took advantage of this.

"Ah, Genevra, we do not all change as easily as you do. Some of us, when we give our love, give it forever."

"You may want to," said she quite dispassionately. "You may be thoroughly persuaded of the wisdom of my flinging myself into your arms and going home with you and living in a polite mess of lies with you ever after. But you are, at this moment, setting me down as an uncomfortably disagreeable woman, and you would take much more satisfaction in boxing my ears than in kissing me. And because I have been unimpressed by your romantic speeches and have treated them lightly in the presence of a witness, you really hate me, and, all other things being equal, you wouldn't care two straws if you never saw me again."

Characteristically, England answered only that part of her remarks in which she had happened to give him an opening to advance some notion of his own.

"It is true that I would rather see you alone, Genevra," he said. "My love for you is such that it cannot bear to see you degrade yourself in the presence of any one, even your own father who will judge you leniently. I have had to cope with this side of your nature before, and because I love you so much, I am willing to help you fight against its reappearance. You really have a dual character, Genevra, and it is something that will make you very unhappy as the years go on, unless you control the unworthy side of it. It gives you the most unwomanly attitude toward questions of moral right and social responsibilities. There are tangible responsibilities in life, Genevra, in spite of your treating the question with levity. If you drop the burden from your back it will merely prove a stumblingblock to your feet."

"That would be quite impressive, if I were given to walking backward," said Geneva.

"You think it is going ahead to deny all the truths in life, to disregard all the restraints that the long evolution of civilization has found best for mankind? Yes, you fancy it is clever to be an iconoclast. I tell you, Geneva, the good, old-fashioned virtues of constancy, unselfishness, and reverence for higher things may go out of fashion, but they should never go from their natural and most beautiful shrine—a woman's heart."

Dorpoint had long ago given up the balancing trick. He wondered how long the conversation was going to last. Geneva wondered too. She sat up more straightly in her chair and one would have said made an effort not to appear sleepy.

"It seems to me," she said, "that we have strayed rather far from our muttons. You wanted to see me about our affairs or, surely, you would not have sent for me. What was it you wanted to say?"

"I want you to return to our home with me at once—before this silly act of yours becomes the property of the gossips and is made a reproach to us both," said England firmly.

Geneva looked up at him in some surprise.

"Nothing could induce me to do so," she said. "I did not come away on any light impulse. I shall never go back."

He went rather gray about the lips as she said it, but there was anger in his voice far more than any suffering.

"You must——"

"If you had been the man I took you for, you would have held my love and my respect always." There was no flippancy in her tone now. "I should have been in the position always to give you the faith and love you so earnestly

insist upon having. But I cannot respect you or love you or have faith in you, and under such conditions I will not live with you. The situation is not the result of circumstances presumably alterable, but of your nature and mine, presumably fixed."

There was a little pause. Dorpoint laid down his pen.

"That is your determination, is it Geneva?" he said. "You must make a decision now that will endure all the rest of your life."

"That is my determination," she replied. There was a fleeting, amazing resemblance in the two pairs of unflinching eyes that looked at one another.

"Very well, then," said Dorpoint, in the same tone. "You may go, my dear. I want to speak to Mr. England myself. There are some material considerations——"

She had turned to the door obediently when her husband's voice impeded her.

"Stop!" he cried, turning on her suddenly. "Material considerations!" A new light seemed to have broken in upon him. "Do you mean to tell me that your love has been unable to survive the test put upon it by these few months of my financial incapacity? Is this the truth of all your fine excuses?"

"I am not aware of having made any such statement," said Geneva, at the door.

But he did not wait for that reply.

"Good God, Geneva, have you none of the qualities my love has seen in you? You are leaving me just because I am down on my luck? Because all things have failed me and left me, for the moment, penniless? Because I gave up all my prospects to marry you? I won't believe it of you! I won't believe that you have so small and mean a nature as to begrudge one half your bread to your mate, when he had given up everything to be with you. Is there anything in God's world I wouldn't

have given you? You might have had the boots off my feet——"

Genevra laughed suddenly and then recovered herself.

"I beg your pardon," she said. "Pray go on."

"I have been thinking all the time how sweet a comradeship—it was that made everything 'ours' instead of 'mine and thine.' I have been thinking that here, at last, was the perfect union that the world has talked of, written about, dreamed of, sung about, prayed for! And I believed that you felt it all as I did, and rejoiced as I did that there was a union in the world from which all mercenary——"

"I am tired of this," said Dorpoint suddenly and sharply. "You have been living on your wife's money—that's the long and the short of it. And there is no sense in treating the matter as if she and I were to blame for it. You go along, Genevra. I want to see about your jewels and your house."

England smiled sadly at her as she turned to go.

"So—it was that!" he said, but with a large forgiveness in his tone.

"Stuff!" said Dorpoint. "If you hadn't taken them away from her, we shouldn't have to mention them now. Do go, Genevra."

"I am going," she said, and went.

England turned to Dorpoint.

"Really, Genevra has put me in a most false position, telling you of that transaction without——"

"Hold on one minute," said Dorpoint, lifting his broad, workmanlike hand. His manner had become less gentle, now that his daughter had left the room. He had let her say her say without hindrance, and now she was gone. "Have you earned a penny since your marriage?"

"You know quite well the unforeseen circumstances——"

"Say 'No' like a man."

"But I insist upon explaining to you that——"

"You can't explain to me!" thundered the other, bringing his fist down with a crash upon the table. The silver tray and the glasses and siphons jumped nervously. "Some of those jewels were her mother's—my wife's, do you understand? They had been on her fingers and on her breast. I would have starved in the streets before I would have parted with one of them. Every ring, every diamond meant something to her and to me. And who are you, in the name of God, that you should step into my life and profane the keepsakes of my wife?"

England finally managed to break through the current of the man's anger.

"If you would consider just a moment," he said, "you would see that this is all Genevra's fault, not mine. She wouldn't let me come to you, although I knew you would rather lend to us yourself than have us raise the necessary money on the security of her jewels. But she was determined, you see, and I gave in to her. I have given in to her altogether too much. I realize that now. But it was done through my love for her. If I had forced her will to bend to mine always, I should not have had my devotion mistaken for inertia and my lack of interest in anything except my wife attributed to laziness."

"Hold on," said Dorpoint wearily. He sat down again. "Just consider it all said. You are a talkative man, and I'm not. I state my wants in as few words as possible. I want the house made over to my daughter again, and the pledges of her jewels."

England looked down in fine contempt at the speaker.

"The deeds for the house will be at your office to-morrow, and also the other papers. Naturally, I intended returning Genevra's jewels to her just as soon as I could arrange it, but I

consider that your conduct in demanding the receipts and assuming the responsibility releases me from any such obligation. I can understand more easily, now, Geneva's bias, since I have been afforded this exhibition of your lack of understanding of the courtesies common among gentlemen. I confess my own fallibility when I say that Geneva's beauty and charm blinded me to those qualities which I should have known would make for marital unhappiness. Geneva married a poor man, and she should have had character enough to live as a poor man's wife, instead of trying to keep up an establishment such as this and then complaining when some of her income had to go toward maintaining it. My fault lies in not having insisted upon it, but I could not bear to deny her anything."

Dorpoint's mouth fell open at this magnificence. Even the elastic idiom of "Tincup" failed him. England was buttoning his coat which was beginning to show horizontal lines at the waist.

"Geneva is doing me a great wrong, but in spite of her action I still love her and offer her the shelter of my arms." The phrase struck Dorpoint as masterfully safe. The man certainly had a pair of arms! "I shall write her to-night to spare us all the pain of another interview such as this. She must, of course, return to me. I will have no conflict of wills on that point. And I want to say that while your language to me has been of a nature to which, among men of my own class, I am unaccustomed, I will overlook it. I shall harbor no resentment."

He turned at the door for a last word.

"In spite of what Geneva has already done, you can rely on me never to refer to it in any way that will reflect upon her. Good-by."

"Great hell!" said Dorpoint slowly.

CHAPTER VI.

It was characteristic of England that he was unable to face the condition that confronted him. He glossed it over, as he moved his effects from Geneva's house to his club, as a mere temporary arrangement. He even gave the valet orders to unpack only such of his belongings as he would need for a few days. In his pockets he had rather less than two hundred dollars, enough for a gentleman to meet the daily rounds. He had, moreover, a letter from one Siegel, among the papers that he spread out upon his desk.

Still, quarters at the club were expensive and, as no word came from Geneva or Dorpoint, he decided to move to a boarding house where the hundred and eighty-five dollars would last much longer. Not, mind you, that he had the slightest notion this slender store was all that sheltered him from the icy blasts of what men in their more genial moments call fortune, nor, had he believed it, could he have acted on the conviction. He looked at his room at Mrs. Sturgis' as a mere temporary cell, at his little cubicle of table in her dining room as a formality—for should he not dine at his club?—installed his formidable array of papers on the desk, put the letter from Siegel into his pocket, and went downtown.

Siegel's law offices were rather a shock to England, attuned as he always was to our best mahogany. A meager little pine-equipped room was what welcomed his thrusting person as he entered, one stenographer, and one parrot-beaked principal confronting him. If the setting rather dashed his imperial-minded imagination, no diminution of his own dignity was visible, but there was no applause in his reception.

"Yeh?" said Siegel, regrettably omitting to remove his cigar.

"I wanted to see you about a private matter," said England.

"My stenographer is just going out to lunch," said Siegel, and rose, not as a matter of courtesy, but to remove a telephone book from the other chair near his desk. His stenographer had had her lunch, but she had not been born yesterday, so she went promptly to the nail where hung her jacket and hat, casting a sharp look at their visitor.

When she had gone out, England seated himself.

"Theatrical matter?" asked Siegel negligently.

"Not at all," was the reply.

"Oh, well, we get a lot of those." He looked his man over without a trace of interest. The quality of his client's raiment had suggested this possibility, that and his somewhat pompous carriage. No one knew better than the cheap little lawyer that if this elegance was of the manner born, it would never have come to his shop.

"You wrote me a letter some months ago," said England, opening his wallet, and if the other saw the hundred and eighty-four dollars that was no more than a bit of stage business. Among several rather impressive envelopes, was the letter England had brought with him. "You wrote me, strongly urging me to protect my interests in the estate of my aunt, Mrs. Holly, of Hartford."

Siegel sat back and chewed on his cigar. Anger he permitted himself only as a stimulant to his wits.

"You wrote me a damn nasty answer," he said. "I considered the matter closed." He was watching his urbane protagonist closely.

"Circumstances," said England, ignoring the description of his letter, "have made it seem to me that I was unduly hasty."

Siegel laughed disagreeably. There was no gaudy plumage to be plucked from this bird.

"I might have got you something, then," he said. "Mind you, I hadn't

any great hopes. But there was a chance. Now, the whole matter is past mending. Will probated, trustees discharged, money paid over to the institution—not a cent to be got out of it." He rather enjoyed the chopfallen look on England's face.

"The matter could not be reopened?"
"Absolutely not."

England, who had rather seen himself in the part of litigant in a considerable estate, although the man's invulnerability made the hundred and eighty-four dollars seem still merely the sort of thing a gentleman carries in his wallet, sat turning over the letter in his hand. But Siegel saw the door behind his visitor open a crack, and a furtive eye and motioning finger.

"One moment," he said, and went out into the hall.

His stenographer had not gone to a second luncheon, perish the thought! She looked eager and a little excited.

"Say, pa, that's Fred England, ain't it?" she whispered. He merely nodded. "Well, they've had a bust-up," she succinctly confided. "Wife gone home to pa, and all that. And his pa-in-law is Dorpoint. Do you get it, Adam Dorpoint. Read all about it in the *Newsy Tatler*. Don't throw him out the window. There may be money in it somewhere."

Siegel's eye gleamed as brightly as hers, if ruminatively.

"Dorpoint," he said under his breath. "Settlement, eh? You're a daughter worth having. Know any more? Right. Well, scuttle."

He went back into his office and re-seated himself, just as England rose to go.

"Wait a sec," he suggested. His busy wits were running to and fro over this newly turned ground. He needed a bit of time.

"I understood you to say the matter was closed," said his client, taking up his hat and stick.

Siegel laughed. At least, he made a noise that he considered amiable.

"There's more than one fish in the sea, Mr. England," he said. "Sit down and smoke. And let's talk. Or let me talk. That can't do you any harm, can it?"

England sat down with a sort of protest.

"Now, I'm a plain man," was Siegel's next venture. If he had said he was an ugly man, he would have told one of the few truths to his credit, but plain in a spiritual way, he was not. In the ugly, tortuous labyrinth of his mental corridors, his mind was hurrying and twisting and turning, the while he talked for time.

"Being a plain man, it's my way to say that I guess you've come to me because you want money." He put up a hand. "Don't take offense at that. Who doesn't? I do." He made the admission with an admirable frankness. "I don't study law and rent an office and pay a stenographer because I don't know what to do with my income."

No inspiration had come to him. Yet he was keeping his client in the chair, that was something. Why couldn't he put these bricks together—England, a wife, an estrangement, a rich father. He must keep talking.

"Now, a man as well known about town as you, Mr. England, must expect to have his private affairs gossiped about. It's not likely you could have any sort of fortune, good or bad, without people being interested. So, of course, I know about what's happened. And there's nothing to be got out of your feeling it a damn impertinence on my part to speak of it. You ain't my client, but you might have been and I naturally am interested."

"It's not a matter I choose to discuss," said England.

"Well, nobody's asking you to," retorted Siegel. "Can't do you any harm if I am so made that I can't help won-

dering if I-can't be of some assistance to you. There's twistings and turnings in law that interest me. I might have found some way here a while back to have got you a neat little pile out of the Holly bequest, and I'd have done it part for the love of the game and part for my commission. You see, I'm open and frank with you, Mr. England, and now you come to me at a time when I'm not sure-I can't find another way to do us both a good turn. In this here present situation of yours you have your rights. You're bound to have 'em. Don't let anybody tell you different. Dorpoint's a big man, but he's got his weaknesses. We all got 'em."

"If it's blackmail you're hinting at, why——"

"It ain't blackmail, and I ain't doing any hinting, Mr. England. I'm talking right out. And I ain't asking you to say anything more than this: If I was to find a way to straighten out these matters for you, would you pay me?"

"I would, but it is impossible that you can do anything about it." England rose again and went toward the door. "I give you no authority to meddle with my affairs."

Siegel leaned forward anxiously.

"One moment, Mr. England, I ain't asking any authority. You can't stop my brains working, and it don't involve you in any way. You can walk out that door this minute and you can't stop me working my brains in your interest. You might never hear from me again. Or, again you might get a letter asking you to step down to see me. What harm does that do you? None. And if I was to land you back where you was, or better than you was, I'd trust you to be an honorable gentleman and see I wasn't out of pocket by it."

Siegel had disclaimed all desire to come to an agreement with the man, but his tongue was dry in his mouth

with the hope of making him speak. England hesitated at the door. And Siegel's heart began to beat.

"You say nothing, Mr. England. Only let me alone. I'll do nothing to bring you in. If I did, you needn't to pay me. And I guess you know me well enough to know that I'm not risking good money for the fun of making a bad break. You let me land you in clover, and you pay me what I've spent and a thousand over."

"It's too much," said England. And Siegel sat back and relaxed and smiled.

CHAPTER VII.

Barbara sat on the floor before the doll's house, beside Genevra. They were both gummy fingered, somewhat disheveled and thoroughly occupied.

Genevra, in the few short days she had been at home, had, in a way her father scarcely understood, lost all touch with her recent life in another home and, apparently serene, taken up the thread of her existence from the time before England had come into her ken. It had been perhaps a lonely sort of life, but she had great personal resource, and had never felt any lack in it. Dorpoint had found that wealth opened all doors to him during business hours, and some few above the dead line. And Genevra's girl friends in her fashionable school had been cordial and hospitable, but she had never, in some subtle way, been one of them. She went to their dances and, later, to a few coming-out affairs, but she knew none of the young men of their set except as she met them at such times and, having no social background of her own and no accredited sponsor as chaperon, had found herself always on the outer fringe.

Of course, though neither she nor Dorpoint guessed it, this anomalous position was exactly what had made her marriage to England possible. He,

too, had never quite "belonged," coming into the circle through his college acquaintances, an acceptable dancer, if rather a theatrical and showy personality. Not one of Dorpoint's business peers would have considered for a moment England's admission as suitor to his daughter, and certainly he himself had distrusted and disliked the man. But it was easy to see how both Dorpoint and his daughter had come to accept him, in the end. Even at that time, her social engagements had become few and, in spite of her father's wealth, she had almost dropped out of that temporary position he had so innocently believed to be hers in perpetuity. He had not known how completely she had withdrawn into an almost solitary existence and now when she had returned to her father's home, when most women would have been concerned with the world's opinion of her action, she had never given it a thought. Nor, for that matter, had the world.

Moreover, for so long had England been utterly outside her spiritual life, that when he came no more within her range of vision, she could forget him quite completely.

This was the more possible as her mind was busy with a new and, to her, immeasurably greater anxiety. There was no doubt about it that her great, strong, unwearable father had altered, was slowly coming into a sort of collapse of energy, perhaps mental as well as physical, and this rather terrified her. She had, in her first realization of this sad change, reached out for the lovely little girl presence with a longing for anodyne as well as in mere instinctive, maternal pleasure.

Barbara's meeting with Dorpoint she had witnessed, had planned it in light mischief and had turned from it with a sick pain in her heart. She had sent the little fearless figure flying down the stairs alone when Dorpoint was fairly in the act of relinquishing his hat and

gloves to Gresham, had seen the child catch him about the knees, had seen him stoop and swing her upward with the sure strength that children reverence. But he had called her "Jenny," and had looked at her in a dazed fashion. What made it harder for her was the knowledge that he himself had been disturbed by his bewilderment, and the fact that she knew he was mentally adding it to other times when he had failed himself.

Even now as she pasted and smoothed panels of a carefully chosen pink chintz to the walls of the best bedroom in the doll's house, she was brooding over this new phase of her life and wondering what was best to do. Travel—perhaps, if it contented him. Or their place on Long Island, if he would go. He had never been an easy father to manage, but possibly in his new apprehension concerning himself, he would let her take charge of him. There was no doubt that he himself realized the old, hard-driven engine needed rest. She smeared some gum from her fingers with her rag, straightened her back, sighed, and then smiled at Barbara.

"Look here, kitten," she said genially, "we mustn't stay in the house all day!" Barbara gave evidence on her frank little visage of great depression at the thought of leaving her present labors. Genevra understood her perfectly. She looked critically at the doll's house. "I want," she said slowly, "two green tubs at the door here, and we must get two very perfect little evergreens to plant in them."

"Oo," said Barbara. Going out now became a matter of some importance.

"We'll take Daddy Dorpoint's car, and go way out in the country, and—I say! Let's take our lunch and have a party!"

Barbara rose in a whirl of exhilaration.

"Have a party!" she sang and laughed.

And just then the telephone rang. Gresham's detached voice below stairs reported Mr. Ogden on the telephone, and required permission to "put him through."

"It's your Jerwy," said Genevra, and Barbara promptly installed herself on her hostess' lap, and spoke her joy into the instrument. To Ogden, at the end of the wire, their mingled voices came with an intimate sweetness that made his heartache rage indeed. He had hesitated, when he had returned a few days sooner than he had expected, about calling up, knowing he should not, but certain that he would. And there was something about this day of early warmth that made him postpone the dreadful time when he would, perforce, deny himself her voice. He found himself actually trembling as he spoke to her, but his voice came cheerfully and lightly enough to her, who could not see him.

"I've got a suggestion to make," he said. "Perhaps you have noticed this is not a city day?"

"How you do forestall us! We were just planning to go out into the country somewhere with our luncheon."

"I might have known it," said Ogden. "Where?"

"Somewhere—I don't know."

"I do," said he. "That is, if you both will go with me."

"But gladly."

"Well, then, I've looked up the trains. We can easily get the eleven-ten. Shall I come for you, or will you meet me at the station?"

"It would save time, if——"

"If we meet at the station. At the gate. The eleven-ten local to Stamford."

"But we're not——"

"Not going to Stamford, no." He heard her laugh. "Yes, it's quite odd how I know what you are thinking. No, I shall not tell you where we are going."

We will get our luncheon there. Trust it to me."

And because she found herself so utterly willing to do so, she did not say they had meant to motor out from town. She understood that, automatically, his mind had planned to take them as he evidently had gone himself at some time "somewhere." She was sensitive enough to know he would feel, if she were to suggest the motor, that the thing had somehow been taken out of his hands, and that virtue would have gone out of it. So, quite like the loveliest lady that she was, she hurried her maid into getting them both ready for a humbler trip, and even Barbara had no excuse to become impatient before they were well on their way to the train.

Ogden was waiting for them, his mind ajangle with the contradiction that he was afraid to look at her, but would give his soul to see her. And the nearness of her, when they did come, brought a tightening of his lips as of a man enduring pain. Genevra had put aside all wearying thoughts, and showed so cordial a happiness that when they sat in the train together, the two radiant faces turned to his, so different and both so beautiful, Ogden decided aloud that they were about the same age.

"We're all the same age—don't put on airs. But do tell me where we are going. I like to think about it."

Ogden laughed a little.

"It's a funny little place. There's no place like it that I know. I found it quite by accident, and I've gone there, now and then, when I wanted a day in the country. I haven't time to be a golfer, and there does not seem to be much country left near town that is not a links. I've seldom seen any one there. And Madame Gallet is such a wonderful cook!"

"But where is such a marvel to be found?"

"It's up a hill and along a road, just a little farm. A French family. The most ridiculous people! Such a house! But we can have our luncheon out of doors. You'll have a rough table and rough linen, but everything as clean as a new tin pan."

"It's not a regular restaurant?"

"It's not a regular anything. Gallet makes money truck gardening, perhaps. I don't know. Perhaps he has a little money. It's a fairly big house—for them and their two daughters—but they never seem to have any one boarding there. It's way off the beaten track. They don't seem to care. I mean, that so few people come. They care most charmingly when one does."

"You're making it up."

"You'll see. I know now why I found it. Beast that a man is, I swore the Gallets could smash before I would spread their fame. I was saving it for you."

"Well, Barbara, think of that!" said Genevra, bending down, her cheeks quite suddenly flushed.

"I don't," said Ogden pleasantly, "hold out for credit on that account. I merely throw it in. You'll find a good deal thrown in, one way or another. Including a long, wide view over the valley." He turned his speech into an airy impersonality.

"I want ice cream," said Barbara specifically.

"Not here," said Ogden. "We never have ice cream in Ferndale. The fairies say it gives them all such dreadful colds."

The child laughed at them each in turn.

"Ferndale?"

"Don't imagine for a moment the name is banal," said Ogden. "It is a very clever disguise. It is rather a name of very low visibility. Nobody notices or remembers it. And under this neglect, it gets along beautifully unchanged."

Gallet's was indeed a very improbable place. There was no conveyance at the station, at the foot of a wooded ridge, and the road was steep and very dusty. This was, so Ogden said, to discourage motorists. It was not because in such a place a steep road was natural. Of course, it was shady. That had been unavoidable because of the trees, but otherwise one could not ask a more unlikely place to want to go to. Then when you got to the top of the hill, there was a fine State road, or perhaps a national concourse, he could not say. But that was all part of the plot. The Unwanted traveled along that route, and so missed Gallet's which lay off to the westward on a little dirt lane where no signboards had ever stood. Geneva listened with a happy sense of having been spared the ignominy of coming by the road of the Unwanted. Barbara danced uphill as easily as on the level. And Ogden walked, indeed, in the fairyland he was creating.

The house of the Gallets was a nondescript affair uncompromisingly ugly, with a narrow veranda built across the front where the afternoon sun would later in the year glow unmercifully into its slender recess. The lawn was rough, but cut, and if the pink and red geraniums were rather unfortunately combined, that again, said Ogden, was one of the defenses, designed to turn the eyes of the Unwanted elsewhere.

"I believe that once upon a time," he added, "old Gallet put up a sign 'Chicken Dinners,' on the side of the house, but overnight it was shingled over, by the fairies, of course, and Gallet, being a wise man has left it so, an integral part of the house forever. The pale-blue trousers with the dark-blue patch in the field yonder is Gallet himself. He is lifting the bell glasses from the vegetables. Bless him for having brought that bit of France with

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them, the only *cloches* I ever saw in America. There, now, you see. He stands erect. It is Gallet himself, just as if it was magic." He put his hands about his mouth and called "Ohé!"

Their host turned, saw them and waved his hat.

"Can you imagine being greeted like that at any suburban Ritz-Hyphen? It's an *apéritif* in itself. And here is more."

A dark, sturdy young woman in a tight gingham gown, faded with many washings, had come to the kitchen door, and now came toward them, smiling and nodding.

"*Bonjour, 'Galette'!*" called Ogden, standing uncovered in the sunshine.

"*Tiens, c'est monsieur!*" laughed the girl. "Always he call us 'cakes.' It is his joke." She bowed in a friendly way to Geneva and caught Barbara in her hard, heavy arms to toss her in the air by way of making her acquaintance. "You have not been for a long time here, monsieur. But such a nice day you are come. You will have lunch, yes?"

"We will have lunch, of course. Listen, Galette. I have sounded your praises without ceasing. Give us a luncheon that will make Armenonville retire into its foundations. I say no more."

"Outdoors, then?"

Ogden pointed with his stick to a table set apart under the trees.

"Ah, monsieur has not forgotten where he would always eat!"

"Monsieur has never forgotten what he ate," returned Ogden, and Galette laughed in pleasure at the compliment. She ran back to the house and disappeared within.

"I will take you to the view I promised," said he. "When we come back, you will find the fairies have been helping this family of the faithful. And Galette will take you within to wash your hands, and as you pass the parlor

door you will see the most hideous room in Christendom. And that," he added, "is something to have achieved."

They went off, through an unpainted fence across a mown, unseeded field, into a little wood of scrubby trees. Ogden ahead, and Geneva and Barbara hand in hand behind him. A sense of utter content, which is perhaps the deepest happiness, seemed to surround Geneva, even as the warm air stirred about her, touching her lightly like caressing fingers. That it was due to Ogden, she fully understood. This was the sort of companionship that she had never had, had always been unconsciously longing for; a comrade of quaint fancies and considerate intuitions. Moreover, a man who made things happen. Being her father's daughter, she rejoiced in that. He was pleasant to look at, too, she decided, not very tall, not very remarkable, but with those things that count the most, a well-built, dependable strength; fine, masculine hands; clear, quizzical eyes, and a most friendly smile.

He turned to face them as they came to a small clearing, stacked with fire logs, and held up his hand to silence Barbara.

"The ground you stand upon is enchanted," he said softly. "Beyond that leaning tree, you'll see the country of those others, as Galette would say. It is not really there, it just appears. In reality, it is too far away for us to see."

He led them on again, around the tree, out of the stunted woods, and brought them to a stand upon the open edge of the hill's ridge. Geneva sat down with a happy sigh.

"Enough for us that it appears," she murmured, looking across the valley with its massed apple bloom, a lovely stretch of misty, early green with square, white patches where the orchards spread.

"Enough for us that it is far away,"

said Ogden, sitting down bareheaded nearer to the edge. "Those are the first two lines of the litany of lost places. Well lost," he added on a dreaming pause. His heart was aching with his happiness. He wanted as a man wants drink in the desert to take her hand as she sat there, and lie beside her in the grass with all her palm beneath his cheek. He wanted her touch upon him to quiet the bitter pain of his delight in her. "You don't, you know, quite look the part," he went on, bracing his stick across his lifted knees in two gripping hands, and speaking with a whimsical lightness, "but you are an old friend of mine. Oh, very old."

He was saying again the things that she was thinking.

CHAPTER VIII.

Geneva's return from the visit in fairyland was marked by the contrasting grimness of the practical world. She found, as she and Barbara entered the house, her father's friend, Nelson Homans, descending the stairs. He stopped on seeing her, and smiled a friendly, but grave greeting. It was enough that he was there at such an unlikely hour to bring a sudden look of fright into her eyes. She hurried up to meet him on the landing.

"I'm very glad you've come in, Mrs. England," he said, taking her hand. "I wonder if I could have a few moments with you?" He glanced in some bewilderment at Barbara, whose short legs had toiled more slowly up the stairs, cordially remarking as she came on her hospitable pleasure in seeing him.

"Shall we go upstairs?" Geneva asked breathlessly, looking all her anxiety into his eyes. As Barbara slipped a confiding hand in hers, she glanced down and said gently: "This is a little friend, Barbara Ogden. You go on up to Nelly, kitten. Gresham, will you take her up?"

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Even Gresham's face was wearing the gravity of deep concern, she noticed. She turned back to Homans.

"Will you come up to the drawing-room?" Her heart was beating with a sudden hurry as she followed him. They sat down on a sofa near the door, and she turned to face him, with a hundred questions in her attitude. Barbara's voice reached them from the hallway saying agreeably, "I like you, Dessum, and I like your coat, and I like Nelly, and I like my daddy, and I like——"

"I came home with your father, Mrs. England," said Homans promptly, with a kindly directness. "He wasn't at all well. And I was anxious to see him safely within doors. He's lying down in the library and seems to feel better."

"What is the matter with him, Mr. Homans?"

"Well, it's no one thing, my dear," he answered slowly. "We had some talk, he and I, about himself, some months ago, and I sent him to my doctor. In fact, I took him there almost forcibly. You know, of course, how he hates all that sort of thing. Thurlow is a Johns Hopkins man. I am telling you all this because I want you to understand that what I tell you is *ex cathedra* and final. Thurlow is the best diagnostician in the country. He took your father apart, and went over him with a microscope. There is very high blood pressure, and a hardening of the arteries. The heart is badly strained. I don't need to tell you that he has worked too hard all his life, his mind has never been at rest, and he is sixty-nine years old. Now to balance that, the rest of him is as sound as a diamond."

"There are two things that he must have, and have at once and forever. Rest and placidity. I don't suggest retirement from business, because that would involve an infinite amount of work in settling his affairs. Let

things go on as they are. I am an oldish fellow, too, but Arliss and our three sons and I can run things at the offices without him. His personal fortune is an automatic affair and gives him no concern. But he's got to stop his games. It will be hard for him to be inactive, but he realizes himself that he must if he wishes to live any longer.

"Now it seems to me, Mrs. England, that much as we deplore the changes that have come into your life," he just touched her hand gently, "your return to your father is nothing short of providential. Months ago when I first saw there was so much amiss with Adam, I suggested that he go to Wales with me this summer. But Thurlow says, and I am sure he is wise in this as in everything, there is an inevitable amount of excitement in travel, however dilatory and luxurious. And excitement, even petty annoyances, must be kept from him. He must move like a gold fish in a bowl, you see, in placid circles. Excitement sends the blood into his head, I suppose, and that produces a mental condition of bewilderment. You have noticed this?"

She nodded without speaking, watching each word from his lips.

"Yes. He told me he thought you had. It was about this very child I saw? I remember. Now, Thurlow does not anticipate any greater trouble in that direction. You naturally want me to tell you everything." He made no question of this statement, but she nodded again. "Your father's mind is not failing, in any sense of the word. The only mental change I have seen in him is that his memory is not so infallible about recent matters, and his old life, his old outlook of the early days is more present with him. This is often so, as people age. That is what, when some excitement quickens his pulse, intensifies his sense of bewilderment. But it is a physical, not a mental condition. Do I make this clear to you?"

"I understand it perfectly. It is an unspeakable relief to me."

"Of course it is," said Homans. "I was going to call you up to arrange to see you this very day, and then your father told me of your being here. He had a slight giddiness in his room at the office, and I told him plainly I was going to take him home. He agreed quite willingly. I think you will find he is going to be sensibly careful of himself—but there was the matter of your house, and—er—other things he wished attended to at once. So you see, we stopped to do that and there we are."

He seemed glad to dispose of the subject.

"Now your father, Mrs. England—perhaps I am old enough to call you Genevra?—needs just the sort of care you can give him. The thing for you to do is to open the Long Island house, and take him there at once. By luck, it is just the right time of year to go there. He can't do anything but loaf, and your affair will be to see that he does it. He's stubborn, if you like, about his diet, but that's again where it is so providential you are at home to see that his table is served with only the permissible things. He's cranky about his toddy, told me himself the little he ever takes would not affect a baby, and that's quite true. Only, you see, he's not a baby, whether or no. But he's surprised me by his willingness to do the very hardest thing of all, which is to give up his active interests in the Street, and I don't doubt he'll be an ideal patient in your hands. I should suggest your seeing Thurlow if I did not know he could tell you no more than this. I'll have him send you instructions. Still, go to see him if you wish.

"Now, as for yourself, my dear, just turn to me for anything you want, let us attend to anything that has to be done, and forget everything except your

job of keeping the cotton wool tucked in around your father. Fishing and reading are fine occupations for him. I'll see that he is supplied with novels and magazines, and he'll enjoy putting around his motor boat. But he must have an engineer to take up the arguments with a balky engine. He's got a fine, high, Western temper, has your father, and I know nothing as promising as a gasoline engine to bring on an apoplectic turn."

He rose and shook her hand, with a pleasant pressure.

"I cannot be grateful enough to you, Mr. Homans," she said. "You have told me everything so clearly. I was alarmed about my father, and quite in the dark. But now that I understand it, it turns out to be much better than my fears. If it's only care he needs, I am just where I belong."

"That's it, you see," he smiled. "Care, continual care, Genevra. And no prancing around among excitements, one after another. He has lived like a man in an ice boat all his life."

Genevra went directly from this interview to her father. Dorpoint was lying on the big library lounge, and she drew a chair near him and sat down.

"Mr. Homans and I have been having a talk, dad," she said serenely. "He thinks, just as I do, that the house at Terriss is the place for you. I'll send Nelly and Agatha and Gresham down to-morrow morning, and they can get the place ready easily in a couple of days. Then we can motor down, say on Saturday, that will give them more than time enough. Bisset's men can come next week, and close this place up properly. So we'll have no confusion, or bother. I'll send Rooney after a man for the boats. I suppose he could take it on himself, but I might want the big car and you might want to go fishing. So we'd better have another engineer. Rooney can pick a better man than we could."

Dorpoint smiled at her.

"I never knew a manager to beat you, Genevra. Sometimes I used to wish you were a boy, but since it is evident my place is in the home, I'm glad you're not. I'm not going to make you any more trouble than I can help. It's hard luck enough for a young woman to have her life absorbed by a good-for-nothing old father, without his cutting up rough about things."

"It's hard luck for you, dad."

"Well, my dear, I won't deny it's not what I enjoy. Taking it easy is anything but easy for me. I get so darned interested in things, but I want to be doing them, not looking on. There's that Powder Horn Hill mine. I've bought it. And I thought we'd jaunt out there before it got any hotter. Take that chap Ogden along. You like Ogden?"

"I don't think I ever liked any one as much, except you," she answered simply.

"Fine chap," said Dorpoint. "Lord, I do like men made with a head on top and a couple of hands to finish off their arms." He glanced at her with an inner contrition, as the thought of England by contrast intruded itself. "But that's that—I can't go. I'll have to do my laughing at Prentice and Coover by long-distance telephone. Well, my dear, you always were a good soldier, and between us we'll pull out as much as we can, eh? I'll eat dry chips without a moan. You'll see. And stick a white ribbon in my buttonhole. Jehoshaphat, just think of all that liqueur Scotch I've laid in! It's in the cellar at Terriss this minute, most of it. Well, even if I can't use it, I like to know it's there. I sometimes get to thinking of old days, before you were born, Genevra, and it makes me laugh when I think what would have happened out there then if a paternal government had decided liquor was bad for our little 'insides.'"

Genevra laughed.

"You're rebellious, for a man chock full of good resolutions."

"Don't you make any mistakes, Genevra. We come of a fine stock, but drinkers and rebels they surely were. I read the other day about President John Adams, all for temperance reform, and drank a couple of quarts of hard cider every morning before breakfast. That was his idea of temperance. I'm not as radical as that." He was in a better humor than she had expected to find him.

"You're going to lead the higher life," she told him, laughing, as she went away to give orders for the moving of the family. When she went up to her room, she found a new case on her dressing table, holding her jewels and, in an unfamiliar case, a diamond bracelet watch for her and a slender string of tiny gold beads for Barbara. She stood a moment looking down at these things, and her eyes filled with slow tears. Closing the box upon them, her gesture had a touch of finality as if she shut away forever the humiliation of her memories. The gift of that gentle thoughtfulness she carried to the child.

Barbara was enchanted, and wore the necklet in her bath with true barbaric effect. She would thank Daddy Dorpoint in the morning, and she must show them to her real daddy. And she must show them to Dessum, and she must show them to Dalette—a personality obscure to Genevra until the wash cloth in Nelly's hand passed from the reluctantly silenced little mouth when it added "when we doh dere adain wif daddy."

"We'll go again, kitten, before my daddy and I go to live in the country. So you can show your beads to Galette very soon, because Daddy Dorpoint and I are going away on Saturday."

"I'm dohin', too," said Barbara calmly. "My daddy and Baabra are dohin', too. And Dessum is dohin' and Nelly is dohin'—"

Genevra was spared a longer list by

attention being distracted by Barbara's being lifted bodily from the tub and rolled in a towel.

"How she does chatter!" said Nelly fondly, and bore her off for vigorous rubbing.

Dorpoint himself had somewhat the same idea, however.

"That small person, now," he said at dinner, when Genevra had thanked him silently for the bracelet she was wearing, kissing the top of his rough, gray head as he looked at the sparkling jewels on her wrist, adding, "one in advance for Barbara." "Why can't I have her down at Terriss? Would Ogden lend her?"

"Do you want her?"

"Young monkey," said Dorpoint rather indirectly.

"She's rather sugar-plummy, I think," Genevra suggested. "I never saw so lovable a bit of humanity in my life. I'd love to have her. And as for Nelly, she'll hardly leave her long enough to hook me up. We went off gypsying to-day with her father, out in the country for our luncheon. I'll be seeing him again. I'll ask him."

"She'd not make exactly a fishing companion," Dorpoint remarked and laughed. "It's a busy tongue. You seem to have hit it off promptly with Ogden."

"The most companionable soul I ever knew," she answered. "Barbara gets her charm from him, I fancy. She wants to show him her new beads—what a man you are to have thought of us when you were out of sorts."

"Homans and I stopped on the way up," said he, dismissing this.

"I'll send her home while we get settled, and come up for her in the car. They'll want to get her ready for a long visit. I fancy Mr. Ogden will let her go, but I'm not so sure about their maid. Barbara has a way of being wanted."

Dorpoint sat dreaming in his place.

"She makes me think of you when

you were little, and those old days," he said quietly. "You were a child like that."

To Jerry Ogden at his office next day, the sound of Genevra's voice over the telephone came like a continuation of his dreams.

"My father has decided to give up his business, as it interferes with his seeing Barbara," she said to him. "We are going down this week, probably on Saturday, to our country house at Terriss, and we want you to lend her to us for the summer."

"Lord bless me!" said Ogden.

"I'll come up to town for her when I get my father settled. Of course, we'll let you come and see her occasionally, but you must promise not to get my father interested in any Powder Horn Hills, as that sort of thing is forbidden him."

"You do put a great deal in very few words. Is Mr. Dorpoint ill?"

"No, he's not ill. But he needs a rest. And he wants Barbara. He told me to warn you the doctor says he must not be thwarted. He has fallen head over heels in love with your daughter, that's the truth; he has begun buying her jewelry already. At any rate she has a new string of beads to show you, and she wants to show them to—"

"Follows a recitation of the city directory, I know," he put in, laughing.

"Yes, but principally she dwells upon Galette. So I thought we might go to Ferndale once more, and she could go home with you from there to get her trousseau ready."

"This very day!"

"Why not?" She laughed at his enthusiasm.

"I've only to let a hotel fall into the subway, and I'll be on my way to the eleven-ten," he answered blithely, and she laughed as happily as he.

The fairyland of Gallet's farm wore its accustomed disguise of ugliness, and the view from the ridge, on this a cooler,

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day, showed even more clearly and more sharply cut. Very occasionally on the little branch line a train sauntered through the cut below them, and was, so Ogden told them, in reality a smoke-breathing dragon doing its sentry-go around the forbidden hill. Barbara went to sleep on her outspread coat, like an enchanted princess, and Jeremy Ogden fell silent in his place beside Geneva.

For this indulgence he must pay, he knew it. But before that day came when he could, because he must, see her no more, he would live to the uttermost his few hours with her, that would be all he had to fill his life for all the years ahead. So, like the natural trinity of man and woman and child they seemed, he let himself dream in this still space that it was true. But he dared not look at her for fear she would read it in his eyes.

It was when they were leaving, skirting the dusty road along the grass, that a memory he might cherish secretly, made itself under the kindly ægis of Galette. Barbara and Geneva, hand in hand, were ahead of him, when he heard himself hailed and, turning, saw her running toward him, waving a small, blue coat. He went back a few steps to meet her, and she put it over his arm, panting out:

"Madame forgot the baby's coat." She nodded and ran back again, leaving him with a smile. It was a very little thing, a mere touch on the canvas of his dreams. One word of explanation would have erased it, but he had let it stand.

CHAPTER IX.

But it was not to be, as he had vaguely feared, their last visit to Gallet's. When Geneva, who had been apprised of Barbara's readiness to become a guest at Terriss, motored up to town and met them both in the lobby of the Plaza, it was she again who suggested their hav-

ing luncheon there, all three. And Ogden could not have denied himself to save his soul. The long summer stretched before him, empty of her, reft even of his child who had for four sweet years made all his happiness. Let him have this one last day and, during her absence, he would take up the task of suffocating the inner voice that cried for her.

Geneva, as before, forswore the greater comfort of the limousine, and went with him in the train.

"This sort of thing gets quite to be a habit," she remarked. "I do not know what we shall do all summer without Gallet's. Perhaps we'll find a fairy place down on Long Island. Would they be little Indian fairies, do you think, in doeskin clothes and tiny feather headdresses?"

"I like that," murmured Jerry. "Rackham should draw it."

"Of course, there'll be no Madame Gallet to send out hot fried chicken, but we'll manage with a picnic basket. We must have chicken Maryland to-day, as a parting feast. And asparagus. I'm very material this day. It's probably this weird sky and the heat."

"It's thunder," said Ogden. "I ordered salvos in honor of your last visit."

"Don't call it that," she protested gently, and Jerry turned away from her reproachful eyes. Her friendship that he wanted so was yet a torture to him.

"Tell her to-day, you fool," said his mind to his heart, "and give up what you cannot do without." But he did not seem to get any nearer to the completion of this program as the day wore on.

All day the sullen gray of the sky grew darker, until the blackness settled lowering about them, and the first far booming of the storm began to roll around the sky. Luncheon out of doors was an affair contested with rude, sudden puffs of wind. The air was menacing, now breathing hot silence, now

blowing cold and sharp through swaying trees.

"I suppose we should be getting back to town," said Ogden, "but it may not last long."

Galette came out to urge the sanctuary of the amazing parlor, and had no more than spoken of her apprehension concerning their welfare than, with a wind that struck them like a cudgel, the rain opened upon them in a wash of water. Ogden remained a moment in the deluge with Galette to help her salvage the few remaining things upon the table, and Genevra and the child ran in where the fat figure of madame held open a door with difficulty. In an instant the whole world without seemed tossing like a ship at sea. Vivid violet and green and yellow lightning split the black heaven in great, jagged rents, and the sky closed crashing over every wound. The veils of water seemed to hang motionless in the air save for the torrents that roared drumming down the gutters.

"It is a storm to take one's breath," gasped Ogden as he came in to shake the water from his clothes out in the oilclothed hall. Depressed ejaculations of mourning came from the back regions of the house, where the Gallets bemoaned together the brutal destruction of some unprotected regions of field. In the deafening out-of-doors the earth seemed cowering, beaten flat, and tall trees had the look of wrenching at their roots in terror to be gone.

On Genevra's lap sat Barbara, her eyes wide and her cheeks white, but her under lip set bravely between her tiny teeth.

"I am by way of liking thunderstorms myself," said Genevra, "but there seems a good deal more than one needs about this one." The message of her eyes to him over the golden head against her breast was unmistakable. "It makes me shake," she said.

He understood her lips better than

he could hear her voice, for the racket of house and tempest about them. No wonder the child was trembling, even in those arms. And terror, as he knew better than she guessed, was fraught with consequences to that little body. He sat down close to them upon the ugliest settle in the world, and Barbara clutched at him and laid her face against his breast. So dividing her baby weight between them, she lay, shuddering with nervous starts at every fresh crash of the thunder, bravely silent, but with endurance ebbing in the strain.

Nothing could have seemed louder than the first collapse of the storm upon them, yet the unbearable noise increased, the house shook on its foundations to the reverberations in the grim clouds about them, and the lightning seemed to lick into the very room with them like flames.

Ogden could feel the small heart pounding in the child and the wee hands clinging with desperation to his clothes. There came a blinding burst of blue light in the room, a pistol shot exploded, and then wild piling up of shattering claps. With the tremendous sound of rending earth, and ripping wood, a great tree fell with a booming scream across the window.

Barbara with one gasping cry raised herself blindly in their arms and dropped back, suddenly limp and lifeless, on their knees.

Stunned as she was, Genevra caught at her, and staggered to her feet. A white, terrified face appeared in the doorway.

"Bring me cold water," said Genevra, and laid the baby down flat on the settle. "Not under her head, Jerry," she said sharply as he caught up a cushion from a chair. "Put it under her feet. Get two of them." She plucked the glass of water from the shaking hand of Galette and dashed a little of it on the small, waxy face. Then, soaking her handkerchief, she drenched the child's

head and wrists. "Fan her," she said, and wet the temples again and again.

The Gallets gathered in the doorway, whispering and fearful. The storm seemed to have abated somewhat, or was so utterly disregarded in this moment that none of them heard it.

"Put her to bed," said Jerry to Geneva. "She'll sleep when she comes out of this. I know."

She nodded and he went with Gallette to see a bed made ready. There was a dark curtain at the window of the room, and he drew this part way down, opening the sash a little to let some fresh air in.

"One light blanket," he said to the girl, who was half sobbing even in her haste, and went below to carry up the child.

"She's breathing better," said Geneva in a whisper as he came in. "Can you lift her now?"

"She will not wake at all," said Ogden. "She'll just slip into a sleep. And in a couple of hours she'll be all right again. I've had her so before."

They took her up and laid her in the bed, when Geneva had deftly slipped off her frock and shoes. She lay very still, her wet curls spread out beneath her pillowless head, but her breathing had become deep and regular, and a little color had returned to her cheeks.

Ogden, with a lingering touch on the child's pulse, went out with a nod and ran lightly down the stairs. The storm, having done its worst, was moving sullenly away, and far to the northwest the blue had broken through the clouds. He went in search of his host, whom he found surveying with a melancholy resignation the wreck of the side porch, splintered to match sticks beneath the prostrate tree.

"Come within," said he, and drew Gallet back into the house. "This is no time for prohibition," said he, smiling. "Get me a bottle of good, heavy

Burgundy, and give it to me like a friend."

Gallet moved heavily away.

"Get two of them," said Ogden. "It will help to move the tree."

The man flung up his hands with a short laugh, and went down into the cellar. When he returned with two dim bottles, Ogden perceived that he had brought a thing he never hoped to see again, a Haut Brion claret for which one might, outside fairyland, seek in vain. Gallet was pleased enough and amused when Ogden bowed to it ceremoniously before he ventured to uncork it. He carried a glass of it to Geneva, and bade her drink it, every drop.

"You'd better rest here by her, a little while. I'll call you in an hour, say."

"I don't need rest," she answered, "but if she wakes alone in a strange room——"

"We'll be near enough to answer her first call. Come down, then, if you like, but drink that wine. I know a man in New York who would give a hundred dollars for what you hold in your hand."

When she came down the storm had ceased, but the blue of the northwest had been shut away again.

"She seems feverish to me, Mr. Ogden," Geneva had forgotten, but he had not, that half an hour since she'd called him Jerry. And even in that moment of stress had wrung his heart thereby. "I don't like it."

"They're kittle cattle, these little ones," he said. "Come outside, I've brought out two dry chairs. There's not a breath of air in the house. True French style, like the potatoes. I'll tell you about her. She's a brave little scrap, and suffers the more, I fancy, for not letting out and howling. Last year I had much the same experience with her in a boat—a nasty squall caught us and we had nip and tuck to make har-

bor. She didn't faint, but she went sound asleep almost as soon as we got in smooth water, and woke as right as a trivet. I needn't tell you how right that is."

She smiled at his absurdity.

"They do recuperate like magic, children," she said. "But she is not sleeping quietly now. She is a little restless."

He looked concerned.

"These upsets are bad for her, of course. We big ones hardly realize how children suffer. But I think she'll come out all right. We'll see."

They were silent for a long while, and presently Jerry leaned forward, his hands between his knees clasped together with a twisting pressure.

"I want to tell you how much it means to me that you should care for my child," he said at last. "It will be a happy thing for me to know she is with you, this summer."

"But surely you will come and see her there?"

Jeremy Ogden drew a long, hard breath.

"No, my dear," he said simply, very gently. "No, I shall not come." His eyes stared under twisted brows, at the beaten earth before them, and did not turn to meet her own as she moved to look at him. She was at first amazed, then puzzled, then a rush of warm red swept upward over her face. Her lips parted on a soft breath. So they sat for several moments unmoving. He seemed to feel the look in her eyes, for he said finally:

"One thing you can do for me. Don't do me the injustice of feeling sorry for me. I am glad I love you, if one can imagine being glad of anything that could not, by any peradventure, be otherwise. One can be glad, I suppose, God did not forget to create the universe. Since He did turn it out this was inevitable. Remember that I am rejoicing in the mere fact that you ex-

ist. If I stay away, it is only because I cannot trust myself. Now that I know you, so do I know I never loved any one else in my life, except my little maid. And it is a love that clamors not to be denied. When you do think of me—and we are such old friends that I know you will, often—remember that I am glad I love you."

He remained looking out under his knit brows and then, rising, stepped off the veranda and walked away, to spare her the need of speech. He wandered down the road, passing but one solitary loiterer who begged a light for the latter half of a melancholy cigar. In the northwest another storm was rolling up, but he gave it no thought till its first shower turned him back.

Twilight had fallen, darker for the darkness of the west, and lamps were burning in the house. Geneva came part way down the stairs to speak to him.

"I've decided to stay here to-night—Barbara is really not fit to be taken back to town in such weather. She's much better off where she is. I've telephoned to town, to Rooney—he's our chauffeur—at the garage. He will telephone my father that I'll be down tomorrow, bringing Barabara. You needn't feel the slightest uneasiness about leaving her here with me. We shall be as comfortable as possible. And by morning I am sure she'll be all right. She needs a good long sleep."

"You're a very arranging person," smiled Ogden. He was determined that no hint of his late confession should show in his manner.

"So my father says," she answered. An indefinite relief had come into her voice and he welcomed it, and determined to make the impression a lasting one.

"Your plan is so sensible I won't discuss it. With your own house in town closed, you would only have to go to a hotel, and you'll get no such dinner as

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we'll have here. I'll tell Galette to get us a dinner to surpass our luncheon, and we'll have it in the famous parlor. Perhaps I can get a dry coat in time to take the ten-forty back to town. We'll have a dinner you never will forget in surroundings such as the eye of man has rarely seen."

"You are a satisfactory soul, not to raise countless objections. But, after all, there are none. Barbara's trunk you can send direct to Terriss, and Rooney will be here early in the morning to take her, and me, straight down to Long Island. So that's that, as my father says. I'm awfully glad you'll stay for dinner."

"You'll understand it when you eat madame's cheese soufflé," he assured her, with calm impertinence.

Later in the evening, the Gallet family, perhaps exhausted by the excitement of the storm, perhaps with a sense of well-earned rest, perhaps made drowsy by the Haut Brion for which Ogden had paid and they had finished, retired to bed in a body. Ogden and Genevra sat talking now and then of everything under the sun except the thing uppermost in their minds, until she, too, declared herself to be nodding, and went upstairs. She was too lovely a lady to let it be but the most casual of partings.

Above, she found in the room next Barbara's a lamp burning beside a big French bed of many mattresses. Barbara was at last in a deep, refreshing sleep, and Genevra did not rouse her in the least when she carried her in, an appealing creature clothed in nothing but a white shift of a petticoat, to lie in the bed with herself.

Ogden sat on, in the absurd parlor so perfect in the eyes of the Gallets, until a little after ten, hoping the rain would cease. Then he rose, sought for his hat and, manlike, took out his timetable for a look at it. Next to the mark of the train leaving at ten-forty was

a casual cryptic V, of which he could make nothing more reassuring than that it did not run on holidays. And until this moment, since early morning, he had forgotten it was the thirtieth of May. The remainder of the Ferndale line was blank.

"Well, that's that," said he impatiently, and looked at early-morning trains. There was little sleep to be expected by one who spent the night on the rosewood-and-embossed-plush sofa beside him, but the advantage of that was it would make early rising an easy matter. As a matter of fact, he slept better than he anticipated, but was up in the brilliant dawn of day, not meaning to wait for breakfast. The six-thirty-eight would get him to town in time for a bath and coffee at his apartment before he went to his office. Galette, coming down to find him on his way through the hall, disputed the wisdom of going fasting to the train, but he was not to be deterred. He put a yellow-backed bill into her hand, and hurried off.

Indeed, Galette was doomed to disappointment that morning, for Rooney came with the limousine before Genevra and Barbara were fairly dressed and, in spite of hurried words of appreciation, Galette felt her beautifully prepared breakfast was not done justice to. They went away in a confusion of good-bys.

CHAPTER X.

Frederic England did not breakfast at the club. Neither, in these days, did he lunch or dine there. Even a sufferer from "the 'hallucination of greatness'" could understand that he would better cherish the dwindling amount of money in his gold-cornered pocketbook, and there was, after the first distasteful effort of entering the boarding-house dining room, some satisfaction, after all, in being the most distinguished presence in that gathering. Any one could see

he was not in the surroundings to which he was accustomed, and could assign some not discreditable reason for his temporary sojourn there. He made no acquaintances in the house, sitting at his little table alone, and going out immediately after his fastidiously eaten meal, moving among his neighbors like his notion of a prince royal.

The first of June, however, was on a Saturday, and that was pay day in the vulgar announcement tacked up in the hall at Mrs. Sturgis'. It was a depressing thought to bring to the breakfast table. Convinced though he was that his place was among the fortunate, he had the night before seriously considered the possibility of his having to offer himself for some lucrative employment. The difficulty he experienced in thinking of some way in which to maintain himself in the style to which he was accustomed was due to the fact, quite unsuspected by himself, that there was nothing on earth he knew how to do.

He passed the unpleasant notice on the wall without looking at it, and went in to breakfast. To his surprise, as he was eating his orange, Mrs. Sturgis, coming in with a packet of mail in her hands, stopped beside him and laid a letter on his table. At first he thought she had had the effrontery to be presenting him with a bill, but almost immediately he saw the envelope was marked Siegel and Siegel, and his hand fairly trembled as he caught it up. It was a short letter, but it acted on him like his long-forgone cocktails.

Come and see me at once.

Rarely has a behest been acted upon as promptly. Leaving his orange half eaten, not waiting for coffee, he strode from the dining room and went upstairs, almost at a run, for his hat. The subway would be abominably crowded with the deserving poor at this time, but he could not wait for a later hour. He

endured the discomfort of the rudely packed train with the resignation of a great gentleman, and shouldered his way through the throng of people in the streets, arriving at Siegel's office almost as early as that diligent worker himself.

There were two girls in the office this morning, and Siegel was in high feather, which seemed to accentuate his native coarseness, but England was not in a mood to notice it. He was walking about the little office, rubbing his hands.

"Pretty good work, eh, Mr. England?" he said jubilantly. "Didn't keep you waiting a month of Sundays, did I? A lucky day when you came to me, ain't it?"

England sat down heavily. He was breathing as rapidly as if he had walked up the three flights to the office.

"Get down to business," he said in the tone of a man who could not wait.

Siegel cast a sharp look at him, and took his seat, drawing a typewritten paper toward him, and then passing it and a pen over to his vis-à-vis.

"This part of the business comes first, if you please," he said with a somewhat unpleasant emphasis. He waited while England read over the agreement to pay one thousand dollars and costs amounting to seven hundred dollars. "It took all my time, Mr. England, kept me away from the office all day and every day, and I lost other cases by it. You're getting it cheap, cheap as dirt."

"Getting what?" said England, raising his eyes from the paper.

"What you want," returned the other.

"You'll not get a cent unless——"

"I should worry! We got an open-and-shut case."

"You say here no other lawyer shall be brought into it on my side."

"That's only fair," replied Siegel. "If you want to go to court, I'm to have the handling of your side, and the fees."

"To court?" ejaculated England. Siegel sat back.

"Mr. England, you don't worm nothing outa me till I've that paper signed and witnessed. After, these young ladies will go out, and you and me will have a talk."

England took the pen and signed. One of the young ladies, after they had witnessed the document, shut it up with a triumphant bang in the office safe, and they both went away.

"Now, then," said Siegel, and licked his lips. "You know a man named Jeremy Ogden?"

"Never heard of him."

"Old friend of your wife's?"

"I tell you I never heard of him. What has he to do with it? Let me tell you, Siegel, if you've got that agreement from me under false pretense, you'll never get a penny."

"Keep your hair on," said the other cheerfully. "Maybe he's got another name, but I've seen him and I know where he lives. Don't make any mistake about me. You come to the right man. This Ogden and your wife, with a child, have posed at a road house, of which I know and you don't, as man and wife, and night before last stayed there till yesterday morning. I've got respectable witnesses, too," he added in a tone that left no doubt this was somewhat unusual for him.

England sat in staring silence.

"I don't believe it," he said finally.

Siegel spread out his hands, unabashed.

"Some of them don't," he commented on husbands as a class. "It ain't always such a cinch to prove it to 'em. I got five witnesses, and can get more to parts of it. Her own chauffeur took subject away with the child yesterday morning. The man left by train ahead of 'em. I spent a cruel day in that storm, let me tell you. But I didn't give up. Another man would have

charged you high for that." He laughed suddenly. "That child, now. A pretty piece of camouflage, I'll tell the world. Never in all my experience, Mr. England, have I heard it used before."

"I can't believe it," said England heavily.

"Ye don't needa believe it," said Siegel contemptuously. "Ye put yaself in my hands." He took up another typewritten page from the desk before him. "Now, just listen to me. You don't want to take this into court, you don't want no divorce. Cause what would you get by it? What you want, as I said when you come here to see me, is to be landed back in clover." The man was repulsive, but England was in no mood to object to a mere matter of manner. "Well," said Siegel, with an unusual flight of imagination, "here's your vaultin' pole. Carry you clean over the fence. This here's a letter I propose to send. You read it over."

England took it, his dense, brown eyes unlighted by any ray of intelligence. The thing was too incredible to excite him. He read a bald statement that the facts to which he had just listened were in the hands of him who wrote the letter, that Mr. England being reluctant to bring so unsavory a case into court—for much of the phraseology of the letter, it was indebted to Miss Becky Siegel's devotion to the *Newsy Tatler*—he would be willing to condone and dismiss the matter under certain conditions he would state to Mrs. England in a personal interview.

"It's a bang-up letter," Siegel declared proudly. "She'll see you fast enough, and you can put a spigot onto ol' man Dorpoint's cash box. Crime, when I think what I've let you in for. I wish I'd got a million instead of this chicken feed. Now you dictate a letter to my dau—my stenographer, and tell your wife you'll come down to Long

Island to see her Tuesday. She'll get these Monday."

"Long Island," repeated England dully.

"My operative says they've gone to a place named Terriss. You must know where it is. House in town is closed."

This intimate detail of Geneva's life was so convincing that England's first flash of belief in the rest of the story showed in his face.

"My God!" he said soberly.

"That's it," said Siegel pleasantly. "My God it is. You've got 'em where the hair is short, I tell you. Don't tell me now you begrudge me that measly pay. I'll get my stenographer back, now. You just draft a letter. It'd better come from my office."

Obediently, England took up the pen. He moved like a man who has been hypnotized. In his slow realization of the fat part fortune had given him to play, there was no room for faith, for self-disgust, for honor. That Siegel was no more of a fool than he boasted was evident when he added as he went toward the door:

"Make it short, now. Don't be flowery."

CHAPTER XI.

These were the two letters that reached Geneva on a day that had seemed to promise nothing but a tranquil content. Barbara was within sight, making friends with an Airedale puppy brought from a near-by kennel by the indulgent Dorpoint. Dorpoint himself was lying at the other end of the sun parlor in a canvas hammock, reading "Sherlock Holmes." Gresham brought her the mail, as his instructions now were, and as she sorted out her own from the disregarding few permitted to sift through his office to her father, she came upon the two typewritten envelopes from Siegel and Siegel, and sat with them one in each hand wondering idly what they might be.

"Don't give me any letters," said Dorpoint. "We've just found the body of a middle-aged man lying by the pond."

Geneva laughed, and thrust her finger under the flap of one of the letters. Dorpoint was indeed too absorbed to notice how sharply the laugh ceased, and how still she sat; nor did he look at her, as she went presently, unearthly white of face, from the sunny room. It was characteristic of Geneva that she should go away to be alone, but it was also now part of her way in life, to keep her father in ignorance of any disturbance, great or small. She went up to her own rooms, and locked herself in. At her desk she read the letters over again, and sat motionless, cold, and sick.

After a little, she slowly put out her arm and drew the telephone toward her. She felt, as one very ill might feel, that her voice was quite unlike her voice, but she could make no effort to make it sound more natural. It was Ogden's office that she called, and when she got him on the phone, she said simply enough for all the distress within her:

"I wanted to let you know we got away safely and that Barbara is quite all right again."

"That's good of you. It's like you, but your voice is not. Is anything the matter?"

"No. It's a poor connection, I imagine. I can scarcely hear you." This was true, but it was not, and she knew it, the fault of the wire. "Did you get your train in all that downpour?"

She heard him laugh a little.

"Forever gone is my belief in a man's understanding time-tables. Do you know I had forgotten it was Decoration Day. And there was no such train."

"But what did you do?"

"I slept on the ugliest sofa in captivity," he answered, "and caught the

six-thirty-eight, much to Galette's displeasure. She wanted to give me breakfast."

"Oh," she said. Her lips seemed too dry to say more, but she forced herself to add: "Please forgive me. Some one is calling me. Good-by?"

It was a hateful way to shut him off, but she felt she could not endure, except alone, a moment longer. She sat amid the desecrated ruins of fairyland, but gave it no thought. All that she saw was the weapon in Frederic England's hand, turned against her father, and the price that she must pay to sheathe it. There was no doubt in her mind what he was coming down to ask: that she should open their doors to him, lest the clamor he could raise outside should shame and anger her father into his grave. It did not surprise her that England could do this thing. Nor that he knew the lengths she would go to protect her father from disgrace. If he had no knowledge of Dorpoint's condition, he had had enough without it. Faced squarely at the facts of life as she had always been, she saw there was no way out, and considered only how she could tell her father that she had made this most improbable decision, without rousing him to some hurtful pitch of excitement.

She sat on, waiting until she could feel as if there was some life in her. From her father she had inherited this preference to do the things that must be done, quickly. She looked at herself in the glass, and saw that some color had come back into her cheeks. And then she took up a jersey she was knitting for Barbara, and unlocked her door. She went calmly down the stairs, and through the rooms to the sun parlor.

"Have you caught the murderer, dad?" she asked, sitting down in a chair near him. "For a man who should have no stimulant, it strikes me you

choose your literature rather injudiciously."

"Great stuff," said he, smacking his lips. "Does an old fossil good to read it."

"Well, put it down a moment. I want to talk to you and there's no time like the present."

"Fire away," said Dorpoint, closing the book upon his finger.

"It's a serious powwow, old dad, and I want you not to get all 'het up' and 'raring 'round.' You know you'll make me out a parricide if you do—so promise not."

She spoke with some lightness, but Dorpoint's open gaze became fixed on her in great concentration.

"I promise," he said quietly.

"I think, dad, I'll let Frederic come back," she said slowly, but with no hesitation.

He did not move, but he said somewhat sternly:

"Go on."

It was not easy to go on, for never in her life before had she lied to him, and fearfully she doubted her ability to deceive him. Yet convince him she must. She wondered if it was natural that she should lay down her knitting and look at him. She rather dreaded those penetrating eyes of his, and yet she did look at him, serenely enough. Well, she was fighting for his life, and if this was the way to do it, it should be done. Let him but guess the toils she labored in, and his wild anger would rush in between him and her protection. If she could tell him, and he could pay England to keep his distance and his dirty story, it would have been so simple. But she dared not risk it. She had seen him once, years ago, in a blind rage against a contemptible creature who had kicked a horse, beat him without mercy. She knew quite well the temperature at which his blood boiled, did his daughter.

"Frederic, you know and I know, is

poor stuff," she said quietly, amazed herself at being able to speak at all. "I don't suppose he can help that. I fancy we'd all choose to be cast in a heroic mold if we were asked. Frederick is rather like a child pretending to be a man. I mean his limitations are those of development. I think I took it for granted he was a man, what we mean by a man, because he was seventy-two inches tall. It seems to me I made the mistake, unaided and alone." In her brave determination, she even managed to smile a little as she said it. Dorpoint said nothing. He lay utterly still, his eyes never wavering from her face.

"You said you'd back me in anything honorable, dad. I know how hateful it will be for you. But this place is big enough so that you need not see much of him. I don't fancy he will feel enough at ease with you, anyway, to spend any time in your society. I hope you feel, dad, that you can agree to let me do this."

Dorpoint waited, to let her say more. But she had fallen silent, looking at the pile of soft, pink wool in her lap. The pause lengthened between them. Genevra felt every sinew in her body tightened in her effort to remain quiescent. She did not dare to add another word to what she had said. In words, at least, she had not lied to him. Though naturally she had not been able to say she was making this decision, as her words implied, voluntarily. In the dread of what questions he might put to her, she felt unable to bear his silence.

"Won't you say something, dad?" she asked painfully, looking up.

His eyes were still upon her, and a certain grimness framed his mouth.

"Let him come," he said slowly. His look passed from her face with the words, and came to rest on the pile of knitting on her knees. She saw, as if he had accused her with it, that he knew she was not telling him the truth.

But that she must bear. At least, her end was gained.

She was ready for England when he came next day, waiting for him in the long drawing-room. He came in, full of the satisfaction of his own power, yet there was relief in his look when he saw she was alone. He had come to realize that if she had told her father, he might be told to "publish and be damned." It was not likely, but one could never tell what these crude Western men might do, and he was coward enough to fear a man of Dorpoint's direct and personal judgment. That she was alone argued his case won, yet he showed no elation, being concerned with his bearing, the bearing of an injured, but high-souled gentleman.

He was taken aback by having the scene taken completely and instantly out of his hands. Genevra motioned him to a chair opposite her deep, easy lounge by the hearth.

"The first thing I want to say to you is that this story of Siegel's is untrue. Mr. Ogden and I have been there three times, to have luncheon out of doors. The third time his little girl was taken ill. I put her to bed and later decided to stay with her all night. I did not know until to-day that Mr. Ogden had not left the house that evening. It was Decoration Day, and there was no train at the time we thought. If the people who served us our meals out on the lawn thought we were man and wife, I certainly never suspected it.

"I don't for a moment imagine that you could get a divorce from me on the strength of this evidence. Nor do I believe you would ever bring it into court, unless you wished to marry again. There is only one thing you could do, and that is let your story and your actions come to my father's understanding. He is not well, and I am doing this to shield him.

"You may return here, under cer-

tain conditions. I will see that you have two comfortable rooms, your meals and a certain amount of spending money. I have not decided how much. You will keep away from my father and conduct yourself in such a way as to cause him no annoyance. Expect nothing from me beyond this. Nothing."

She rose, in complete self-possession, and rang the bell.

"The motor will take you back to the station," she said, and left the room. England sat in utter stupefaction until Gresham appeared to show him out. He had not spoken one word since his entrance. It had been a vastly different scene from that in which he was letter-perfect.

But on his return next day, he had regained poise. Whatever his wife's attitude might be toward him, he could ignore it, and set his dull mind at ease in contemplation of his aggrandizement. He stepped into the great colonial hallway with the air of a man entering his own house. In studied indifference he went up the wide, curving stairway, serenely observant of the luxurious setting he had achieved, the means by which he had installed himself again in comfort banished forever from his mind.

His rooms and his bath were all that the most exacting could imagine. Gresham, depositing his suit case in the bedroom, said as he returned:

"I will send Leveridge to unpack, sir, when your luggage comes."

"Is he to valet me?" asked England inattentively. No vision of the flowzy chambermaid at Mrs. Sturgis' intruded itself at this appropriate moment. "Tell him to bring me up some Scotch at once."

"Thank you, sir," said Gresham, and withdrew.

England felt only approval of his surroundings as he sat stretched out in a long chair before the windows open-

4—Ains.

ing outward over the carefully cherished garden. Elation was not in him, for this seemed merely his natural place in the shade, but his egotism puffed in the consideration of his material well-being. He waited in a bland contentment, till Leveridge entered noiselessly, carrying on a tray an agreeably generous decanter of whisky, a siphon, and a glass of ice. The man drew up a small table to his elbow.

"I prefer still water," said England. "You may take the soda away."

Leveridge departing to correct this blunder, England poured himself an unholy amount of neat spirit, drank it off, and recharged the glass with a moderate dose to account for its appearance. The warmth of the alcohol ran deliciously along his nerves, and subtly increased his appreciation of his achievements. A passing energy drew him to his feet as he heard the high, clear laugh of a child below his window. This must be the very child she had been with on that memorable day that had given him back his vicarious wealth. He frowned slightly, wondering if he cared to have the child about. But, as she came into his line of vision he perceived that Dorpoint walked beside her, one hand in hers and one carrying a round, scrubby ball of Airedale pup. England returned to his chair. After all, let the child stay, he thought. What difference could it make to him?

The thought of Ogden came to him vaguely. But it was not likely there would be much of him, now that Geneva's husband was on the scene. For the present, he would let matters remain as she had planned them. In his own good time, he told himself, as he took the glass of Scotch and still water from Leveridge's tray, he would impose his own conditions.

The afternoon post brought Geneva another letter which she carried to her room to read, though not for the rea-

sons which had taken her there before. She had never had a line from Jeremy Ogden, but she needed no one to tell her this quaint, squared, almost printed writing was his. As she closed her door, she seemed to shut herself in with a sudden, overwhelming realization that she loved him. She leaned against the doorway with the letter held tightly in her hand, her eyes closed, and the color wavering over her face as if she stood in the light of some great fire.

It was a short message, surely, when she came to read it, but it intensified her sense of his nearness.

Don't think I mean to allow letters to seep through my resolution not to trouble you. But I must hear that nothing is amiss between us. You shut me off as if you had cut the wire with a pair of shears. Send me a word, beloved.

She sat with the letter before her a long time, thinking of many things that came chaotically to her mind. Her joy in loving him, herself beloved, her pain in loving him, his pain in loving her, these were the colors of all her weaving thoughts. She had never known what he had thought about her married life, probably he had taken it for granted, seeing her at her father's, that she had left her husband. There had been every suggestion that she was there to stay. She herself had felt so forever done with England that she had accepted his companionship as freely as a girl. If she had only known him one short year ago! Not only for herself, her loyal heart winced at the thought. She thought of "Daddy Dorpoint" with a son like that, and the agony of what she had brought into her father's life twisted her as with pain.

Her eyes were full of tears as she sat down at her desk to write the answer that he begged of her.

If it was better that he should know England was again with her, he must never guess the part he had played in making the situation possible; if it was

better that he should think of her as England's wife, it was torture to her that she could not explain to him. So in tune were they, one with another, she felt that he must know she loved him.

She wrote slowly, and the tears in her eyes did not dry.

Your daughter is playing with Daddy Dorpoint and the little Airedale he has given her. If I cannot restrain my father's propensity for buying things for Barbara, you will be forced to take on a large establishment, or he will have to throw in this house as a container. Mr. England came down yesterday. We are all well, and nothing is amiss.

What a letter to send in answer to his dear, honest question! She put her head down on her arms and sat motionless, the waters of bitterness flooding over her. But the letter was sent, and in a few days there came in answer a box of roses. And, after that, silence.

She was a brave woman, Geneva, but it cost her every uttermost farthing of strength to walk this path unaided, misunderstood, and forever in anxiety for her father. Dorpoint, she knew, was watching her, keenly alert for a clew to the mystery. England he avoided as much as possible, and in this was the more successful, as England had no wish whatever for his father-in-law's society. With Barbara only was Dorpoint happy, and only rarely were they separated. They spent long days in his motor boat, and presumably what fishing he did synchronized with her naps. They took slow rambles in the spreading gardens and often, with Geneva, had their lunch on down near the water in a little pillared pavilion.

The days were of interminable length to Geneva, yet they passed, as days will, and midsummer followed June, according to immemorable custom.

England spent most of his time in his own quarters, in the company of his own self-approval and of Dorpoint's liqueur Scotch. He had at first given

a thought to possible changes were Dorpoint to die; it had occurred to him that as Genevra was admitting his claim only to spare her father, she might refuse to continue to do so when she no longer had him to consider. But with custom his sense of security became a conviction of possession; with no critical witnesses of his daily rendition of the part of a wealthy and well-born gentleman, his acting became to him reality; with his megalomaniac bent unthwarted, and his distorted wits fattened and dulled with overstimulant, he saw himself monarch of all he surveyed and of a very considerable area that he did not.

It had stirred a curious emotion in him when at first he had seen Barbara shrink from him; he had the impulse to strike at her, and a very decided wish that he might put her out of the house. But now he tolerated the thought of her presence in the place, rarely indeed seeing her, and was benignly patronizing when their ways crossed. Dorpoint he avoided. Though nothing could have made him admit it to himself, he went in apprehension of the man whose broad, work-hardened palm could smash his castle of sand, and as his body and brain became sodden with intemperance and inaction, a physical fear joined company with his instinctive shrinking from Dorpoint's possible expression of his undeniable hatred. In his exalted dreams, when he lay in his long chair drugged with his drink, he saw Dorpoint as well as Genevra his conquered and unsparing slaves.

To one thing he had made up his mind. When he saw fit to demand it of her, Genevra should give herself to him again, and the knowledge of her unwillingness made her the more desirable to his mounting cruelty. Let her believe he had acquiesced in the barriers she had set to his liberty. The more overwhelming would be his triumph when he overrode them. And

override them he would. For what could she deny him?

He would laugh softly to himself, and press his soft hands together as he pictured her, a proud rebel, lying broken in his arms. With this excitement he inflamed his solitary reveries, until desire spurred him on to wait no longer for this luxurious indulgence of his power.

Genevra, carrying the baby Airedale up the stairs his little legs made such tedious toil to climb, in the deserted silence of the house one August night came upon England waiting for her in the hall above, an England scarcely recognizable even to her who had seen him in more than one drunken mood. Dishveled and with loose lips parted in a smile, his eyes glittering with intoxicants, he stepped near her, struck the puppy from her arms, and laid his hands upon her shoulders. She gave him one angry stare, wrenched herself free and stooped in one movement to pick up the dog.

"You fool," she said, and her voice, though low-pitched, was vibrant with her contempt. "Go to your room."

He laughed softly.

"You're coming with me to my room," he said, bending toward her, and laughed again.

She met his eyes for one instant and, without her own volition, her hand instinctively shot forward and thrust him back. He staggered a step uncertainly. And in that moment she passed him, went into her room near by, and locked the door she swiftly closed on him. England stood where she left him, not at all cast down by this repulse, for was it not against her will he wanted her? After a little he laughed again shortly and almost noiselessly, and went back to his rooms, and his whisky.

It was by the merest chance that Dorpoint was a witness to this scene. His own quarters were on the ground floor

in an eastern wing, for even the exertion of mounting these shallow stairs had been forbidden him. He had been aimlessly enough wandering to the library; thinking the whole household abed, and unable to sleep himself, he had gone in his dressing gown to read perhaps until the change of rooms brought drowsiness. He had come to a stand at the foot of the stairs, seeing Geneva at the top of the flight, and then England had stepped toward her.

Dorpoint, his great hands closed into fists, his pulse pounding in the tips of his fingers, stood staring up at the place where they had been long after they had left it. His heavy grasp fell finally on the baluster and his foot lifted to the first stair. Then he lurched sidewise to the wall and stood struggling for breath. He groped his way at last back through the drawing-room door and dropped down into a deep, cushioned chair just beyond the threshold.

His mind was confused by his rage against England, for greatly in the dark as he was there was no mistaking the meaning of that scene. The prolific epithets of an earlier environment boiled upward from his subconscious memory, yet none seemed framed to express the contemptible vileness of this man. Out of Geneva's life he must go, yes, and, by God, out of his own! For whatever reason Geneva had let the worm creep back to a soft nest, he would have him out of it forever.

But he must keep down this pounding blood, and hang on to his fury; a bit more of this might easily make an end of him, he had no doubts on that score as his great frame shook and shuddered in the restraining calm with which he strove to quiet it. Not for one moment would he leave this chair all night; he was well within hearing and within a few steps of seeing anything that might threaten Geneva. Impossible as it seemed for him to do, he would wait till morning, and then rid

their house of this foul beast. Throughout the night he would watch, but striving to keep his thoughts away from England. Let him live long enough to do his morrow's work, and he cared little what came afterward. In an hour's time, his leaping pulse had quieted, and, a fact of which he was quite unconscious, the subsequent exhaustion had sunk him into a doze.

England, in his own rooms, walked about restlessly, his mind busy with the problem of that locked door. A quite insane desire for the satisfaction of his long dream of mastery drove him, his head full of the fumes of his drink, from one futile plan to another. Let him but get that door open and the rest was easy. She would make no outcry, struggle though she might. Dorpoint's rooms he knew were beyond the reach of anything save wild cries. There would be none of that. But how to achieve the opening of that door?

Suddenly he stood motionless. Then tossed his arms up and rocked on his feet with silent, dreadful laughter. He ran across the room with the steps of a cat, flung open a closet door, and rummaged in its depths. He came out, still laughing, with a riding whip in his hand.

CHAPTER XII.

Geneva, who had gone to bed after an hour of bitter and uncharacteristic weeping, had fallen asleep at last, her burning cheeks soothed by the cool touch of her linen pillows. Dreamlessly she slept, her mind released from her problems, her body relaxed to its last nerve. From the depth of this unconsciousness she was roused by a sound, a sound which at first brought her with a leap to her feet as the recollection of England reached her ahead of the memory of her having locked the door. The sound repeated became a low, sobbing call of "Let me in, I dot

an earache." There was a soft beating of baby fingers on the panels.

"Darling! I'm coming!" she answered, wide awake on the instant. Even as she ran from her bed, the beating on the door increased.

"Let me in, let me in!" The little voice had broken at her answer from its low tone and risen to a strangling cry. She tore the door open, and Barbara flung herself within, screaming and clawing at Genevra's nightdress as if to hide herself.

Behind her, England stepped in, laughing, a riding whip switching in his hands.

"Don't let him, don't let him!" screamed Barbara, beside herself with terror. Her baby voice was hoarse with the constriction of her choking throat. "He dot a vip, he dot a vip."

Genevra lifted the child, so mad with fear she even struggled in the arms she knew were those of refuge.

"It's all right, baby," she said, compelling her voice to calmness. "Lie quietly in Geffa's arms. No one can hurt you, Babs. Poor Babs. Poor baby."

"She got her lesson straight," said England, grinning as he looked on. "Well, I got the door open, you see. Now put her out. I don't want her around."

Genevra lifted her blazing eyes for one moment from the hysterical child. But what she saw was Dorpoint in the doorway, Dorpoint's hand descending on England's shoulder like the hammer of some great machine. Under the blow of it, England reeled aside, his face yellow with the shock.

Dorpoint strode past him and took the baby from his daughter's arms. His voice in that room of tempest came with startling gentleness.

"Don't cry, poppet," he crooned, kissing the little face disfigured with its tears and terror. "Here's Daddy Dorpoint, Babs. Here's your big giant to

take care of Barbara. And here's Geffa, baby dear." He smoothed her curly head tenderly. Genevra could see his wide frame shaking to the beat of his unbridled heart, and felt herself grow cold to the lips.

"Oh, God help us!" she moaned in her anguish. Dorpoint's eyes met hers, level and filled with a look at utter variance to his masterfully quiet tone.

"Take care of her, Geffa. Get her to drink some bromide if you can. Ring for Nelly. Perhaps you'd better have a doctor." He laid the child in her arms and turned.

England, the courage of his liquor evaporated, stood leaning weak with cowardice against the wall, unable to think how he could get away. Even to him, so long as it was in the hearing of the frightened baby, Dorpoint's voice was low-pitched, but with that throbbing beneath it that brought sweat to England's face. He pointed to the stairs.

"Go down," he said grimly.

Genevra watched them fearfully as they went away in a silence unbroken save for Barbara's wail.

"He told me to say I had an earache! An' he had a vip! An' Babwa was fwighted!"

"It's all right now, baby," said Genevra, wishing with all her terror-smitten heart that she spoke the truth. Her father's face had been gray with the restraint he put upon himself, but she knew what even the control of his rage was costing him.

She rang for her maid and laid Barbara into her bed. The child, secure in her presence, was becoming slightly quieter, but her cheeks were flaming with a feverish heat. When Nelly came, showing a startled face between steel crimping pins and a cotton kimono, Genevra had induced Barbara to drink a mild dose of bromide, and with the quick response of childhood, she was already yielding to drowsiness.

"Don't ask questions, Nelly," said Geneva softly. "Sit down here by Barbara. She's sick. I'm going to telephone the doctor." She was at the telephone before she had finished speaking. In reality, it was not so much for the child's sake, serious as she knew the results of fright to be for the sensitive little creature, that she felt she would be glad of a physician's presence. She was in grave alarm for her father.

But when she had been assured the doctor would come at once she did not leave her desk. The thought of what might happen between now and morning made her feel poignantly her need of help. With her usual swiftness of decision, she put aside any reluctance to call Ogden to her, and before he could answer her from his far-away apartment in New York, had planned even the best way to hurry his arrival.

She told him merely that Barbara was upset with one of her characteristic fevers following a fright, that she would be glad if he could come, and that Rooney would meet him at Jamaica. Having sent Nelly to arrange this with the chauffeur over the house phone, she dressed herself rapidly and, by the time the maid returned, was ready to go to her father. She ran swiftly down the stairs, and to the western wing of the house.

Dorpoint and England were standing in the middle room of the suite; Dorpoint, still ashen of face, staring out at the moonlight through the window; England, a pitiable figure of fear, unsteadily leaning by one hand on the table, his furtive eyes switching from one thing to another about the room.

Dorpoint turned as Geneva came in. "How is Barbara?" he asked immediately.

"Nelly is with her. I gave her the bromide and sent for Doctor Haslam."

"Very well." Dorpoint came a pace or two toward her. "I've been waiting for you, Jenny. I want you to tell me

now why you let this miserable cur come back here. I want the whole story, this time," he added between his set teeth.

England, his white face glistening with moisture, held out a shaking hand.

"Listen," he whined, "I'll go away. You let me go away. I won't come back. You let me go and I'll——" His voice died as Dorpoint flung him one blazing look.

"Go on, Geneva."

"He had a detective following me," said she, with what calmness she could, her anxious eyes upon her father. "Mr. Ogden and I went three times to luncheon at a little farm near Ferndale; we took Barbara with us, and ate at a table out under the trees. The day I went in to get Barbara to bring her down here, we went there for the third time. You remember that day. There was a thunderstorm. We sat in the house. Barbara was frightened and, when one of the trees was struck and fell on part of the house, she fainted. I put her to bed. Later, when she was not well enough to take the long trip back here, I decided to stay with her. I phoned Rooney to let you know. Mr. Ogden and I had dinner together in the parlor and I went to bed. I took Barbara out of her room and she slept with me. I did not know the people at the farm thought we were one family. Of course, I see now how we must have seemed so. Mr. Ogden made a mistake about the train and stayed until early morning, sleeping on the sofa in the parlor. I did not know until this man's lawyer wrote me that he had stayed all night. They threatened to take this story into court, if I did not let Frederic come back."

"God!" snarled Dorpoint, in physical disgust.

"I did not dare to risk telling you—you know why, dad. There is this much more to tell you. I never expected to see Mr. Ogden again, for he

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told me that last day he loved me and would stay away for fear he might distress me. That's the sort of a man Jerry is. I did not realize it then, but I know that I love him, daddy. I don't see how I could help it." She stood proudly before him, their eyes, in their great likeness, meeting in grave directness. Dorpoint put out his arm and drew her close to his side. She could feel the laboring of his breath. "I telephoned him just now," she added, taking her father's hand, "to come to Barbara."

"You made it clear to"—he designated England with a slight motion—"you would not live with him as his wife?"

"The day he came for his answer to the letter."

"I saw," said Dorpoint steadily, "what happened this night when you went upstairs. I was waiting in the parlor to see that nothing more went on until morning. And then I meant to clean my house of this man. I must have fallen asleep. Make me sure I understand just what he did."

"Oh, dad dear, won't you spare yourself?" she implored him reproachfully.

Dorpoint drew a harsh breath, and his voice came grinding from his jaws.

"He took that little child, my little pal, to get your door open—is that so? He told her he would beat her with that whip."

"Yes," said Genevra in a sickened whisper.

The man's heart struck like the blows of a hammer against her own body as she clung to him.

"Daddy," she begged him softly.

"Go back now, dear, to Barbara," was all the answer that he made. With the slackened arm that had held her, he pushed her slightly from him.

"But, daddy——"

"You should be there when Haslam comes," he said. Inexorably he took her from the room, standing upon the

threshold a moment to say to her: "Don't tell Ogden more than you can help. I should not be answerable for this man's life." He would not let her say more. Indeed, he knew too well the warning that she ached to give him. "I understand, my dear," he said. His speech seemed slower and more difficult. "Now go." He closed the door between them, shutting himself in with that abject, cringing creature whose voice began a babbling protest as she went reluctantly away.

In the hallway of the main house she found Doctor Haslam coming down the stairs in search of her. He turned on seeing her, and led the way back to Genevra's rooms.

"But tell me what on earth has happened?" he said, his eyes bent upon the child, in an apparently natural sleep.

"She was badly frightened," said Genevra in some distress. "I've seen her have a time like this before. She's very high-strung, and gets feverish like this. Her father told me she was so before. I gave her a very little bromide; sleep seems to be the thing that brings her out all right again."

"You did the best thing," he answered quietly. It was evident he forbore with some difficulty asking what had frightened her. "I think I'll stay a little while and see how she feels when this nap is out. Just show me what you gave her."

"I telephoned her father," she said as she went to get the medicine. "I should be glad to have you see him. He'll be here very soon now."

It was indeed not long after that another car came swinging round the curve of the driveway. Nelly, now more presentable, went down to open the door, and Ogden came in quickly, followed by Rooney's voice remarking with much composure outside:

"I'll stick around. You may be needing me to run errands."

"Your little girl's all right, sir," said Nelly sympathetically. "She's sleeping like an angel. Will you come up? The doctor's here, and Mrs. England's up with her."

"I'll go up," said Ogden in some relief.

It was just at that moment the silence of the great empty rooms about them cracked with the sharp explosion of a shot.

In the first paralysis of their shock as their amazed eyes still held one another, Genevra came racing down the stairs.

"Oh, God, Jerry! Oh, my father!" she panted as she ran past him toward her father's room, Ogden was with her as they reached the door, his hand wrenching at the knob beneath hers. They tore the door open, as Rooney, Nelly, and the doctor pressed up behind them.

The air that blew toward them came tinged with the taint of gunpowder, the smoke still visible as it hung between the two figures within the room. England was lying on the floor, and midway between his outflung hand and arm and Dorpoint's chair, a long blue revolver lay impartially between them. For an instant there was no sound among them, then Dorpoint, who lay back with closed eyes, drew a sterterous breath.

Genevra with one sob was at his side.

"Daddy," she said. "Daddy—darling."

Doctor Haslam gently put her aside. He had knelt for one eloquent moment beside England.

"Let us get him flat," he said quickly. He motioned the other men nearer, and they bent to raise his heavy, inert body. The farther door opened to show Gresham's startled face. He came in without speaking and lent his strength to theirs. Even so with some difficulty they carried him into that farther room and got him on the bed. Rooney, not

waiting to be told, dashed through the house, and up the stairs for the doctor's bag. When he came back with it, Jeremy Ogden, with a touch on his arm, drew him back into the room where England lay.

"This man is Mr. England?"

Rooney nodded, wiping his brow.

"He's dead," said Ogden. "Is there another door out of that bedroom?"

The chauffeur nodded again.

"Into the hall," he answered.

"Then lock this door," he pointed to the one connecting the two rooms. "I've got to send for the police. There's no way out of that. And this will have to be left untouched. We'll go out, and I'll lock up here. You go around now to the bedroom door, and be ready to help. Let them see you are there. Don't talk to them."

"Right," said Rooney softly, and went as he was bidden.

CHAPTER XIII.

The house was eerily quiet, as if each arriving person brought more silence with him to swell the stillness. The police had come, the coroner, and Mr. Homans with Doctor Thurlow. But after the removal of England to a room in the eastern wing there was little to be done but wait for news from the sick room.

Dorpoint lay in his bed, giving no sign of life, except for his hard-drawn breathing. Genevra was with him and the doctors. But there was not among them the activity of hope.

Leveridge had served a breakfast to them all, and Ogden sat with Homans at dawn in the sun parlor over their coffee. It was not until the two men were alone that Gresham came to them, very pale, very composed. He stood in the doorway, and seemed to ask permission to enter. Homans, glancing up at him, recognized by his bearing he had come on a more important errand

than any connected with their breakfast service, and motioned him nearer.

"What is it, Gresham?"

"I wanted to speak to you, gentlemen, before the police begin to ask me questions. I've been busy for Mr. Dorpoint all the time they've been here, and I've just got off for a moment. I was in Mr. Dorpoint's bedroom when this happened and I will have to tell what I heard."

"You'd better come over here and sit down," said Ogden quietly.

The man came nearer, and took a chair at a very slight distance from the table.

"Thank you, sir." He clasped his hands together closely, and was silent a moment. "There is more about this than you gentlemen know," he said at last, "and more than the police need know, and I'd like to get it sort of straightened out for me to tell. Mr. England was not wanted in this house, all of us knew that. But I want your permission to tell the servants they are to repeat none of the gossip about it. None of us except Rooney and Nelly and myself were about to-night, and what the other servants could tell would not be evidence. But it would strengthen suspicion against Mr. Dorpoint. He hated Mr. England."

"You've got a good head," said Homans dryly.

"Get on with your story," said Ogden.

"What happened was that Mr. England shot himself. I know it to be a fact." He said this very calmly, but his face went even paler as he did so, and the eyes of both men turned for one instant from their scrutiny of him to glance at one another.

"You may think Mr. England was not the man to take his own life, but he had been drinking like a swine—excuse me, gentlemen—and he was in trouble with Mr. Dorpoint. I heard enough to put together what happened

to-night. He got into Mrs. England's room, which was nowhere near his and which she had locked, by getting your little girl, Mr. Ogden, to call her to the door. He scared the child into it with a whip in his hand."

Homans put out a quick hand on Ogden's arm as he made a sudden movement.

"England has gone to his reward," he said softly, not taking his eyes from Gresham's face. "Go on."

"Mr. Dorpoint came on them then, I don't know how. It was the double outrage upon his daughter and the little girl that's brought him where he is, Mr. Ogden. He loved the little girl like she was his own. He was so raging with Mr. England that flesh and blood couldn't endure it. And that I don't want to tell to the police. Nobody knows it but Mrs. England and ourselves."

"Now, what happened in that room was this—or what I heard of it, because sometimes I couldn't hear a sound and sometimes I couldn't make out what they said or what was going on. I sleep in a room next Mr. Dorpoint's now, since he's been not so well, and hadn't undressed when I heard him go out earlier last night and not come back. And, finally, I got scared waiting and thought he might have been taken dizzy somewhere about the house. I went into his room quietly to see if he'd come back without my hearing him. And then I heard him talking in there to Mr. England. I wondered at that because he hasn't spoken to him, hardly, since he came here to live. So I listened. I'm glad I did, say what you like."

"You're a good fellow, Gresham," was all Ogden found he liked to say.

"Mr. Dorpoint's voice was husky and angry—it was a terrible voice, gentlemen, and he spoke to Mr. England like he was beating him with a blackjack instead of words. I never want to hear

the like of it again. Mr. England was half crying I should say by the sound of it. The upshot of it was, Mr. Dorpoint got the pistol and pushed it across the table to him. I could hear it. And he said, 'You're not fit to live, you cowardly skunk. Take this and make an end of yourself. It's better, by God, than you deserve.'"

He looked at them in turn a moment in silence.

"It's like Dorpoint," said Homans at last, consideringly.

Gresham loosened his clasped hands to make an open gesture as if he dropped something to the floor.

"You may believe it, gentlemen. I am telling you the truth. But there is more of it."

"Let's have it," said Ogden quietly.

"It was a pretty breathless time for me, you may imagine," said Gresham slowly. "And I could hear Mr. England whining, but not saying anything. He hadn't a nerve left in his body. You don't know Mr. Dorpoint like we do, Mr. Ogden, but I tell you flat if he'd told me under the same circumstances and in the same overpowering way to shoot myself, I'd have done it. I couldn't have stood against him. I heard heavy steps like Mr. Dorpoint's moving away from him, as if he was leaving him to do it right then and there, and then there was a jar like he had made a quick jump. And I heard him growl like it might be a wild animal speaking, and Mr. England gave a kind of sob, as if he'd struck him. Then the shot. It's my opinion, gentlemen, Mr. England took the gun when my master turned his back and aimed it at him. And Mr. Dorpoint turned and struck it up. And it went off and shot the man it should."

"You are not going to give your opinion to the police?" said Ogden, without moving. "You see, the direction of the shot was extraordinarily level."

Homans gave him a grim, fleeting smile.

"I am going to tell the story as I explained to you," said Gresham quite respectfully, and rose.

"You'd better take these dishes," remarked Ogden, "some one is coming through the drawing-room." In two steps he was at the open French window, smoking placidly in the dawn with his back to the room, looking quite unlike a man who had been giving criminal advice to a star witness.

But the intruder was no more important a person than Nelly, who came red eyed and tremulous of lips to give a message from Barbara.

"Your little girl's awake, and being dressed, Mr. Ogden. She's all right again, as bright as ever. However she's going to be told when—" She faltered and broke down, crying again and wiping her face with her apron. "The doctors say he isn't going to live, isn't Mr. Dorpoint," she sobbed. "He may know us for a little before he goes, but it's likely he'll go out as he lays."

Gresham put down the cup and went to her, putting his hand under her arm gently.

"Come away, Nelly," he said softly, and drew her with him beyond the doorway.

In a few moments Ogden, waiting with kind discretion where he was, went off after them and so in search of Barbara.

It was toward noon that the atmosphere of the house changed subtly and with the rapidity of flying rumor. Dorpoint was conscious. The house seemed to wake with him, and to become murmurous with life.

Doctor Thurlow, who brought this news to the police, sitting with ominous patience in the room where England had lain dead, motioned them back to their places.

"It is not possible for him to make a statement at present. Or to receive

one," he added sternly. "I am responsible for my patient, and it would be nothing milder than murder for him to be called upon to receive you now. Naturally, I shall bear in mind your necessity to see him at the earliest moment coincident with his ability." He bowed to them slightly and went back, closing the door behind him, leaving them, for all he cared, as convinced as he, that such a time was not to come.

Genevra, kneeling by Dorpoint, was the first to receive the flicker of recognition from his eyes. His look dwelt on her for a little while and then passed slowly to the doctors. He looked back at Genevra and a faint smile came to his face. He seemed to tell her that he understood.

Doctor Thurlow, his hand on Dorpoint's wrist, bent over her.

"You have a little time, Mrs. England. Speak to him if you wish." He touched her compassionately on the shoulder, and withdrew with Haslam to a distant corner of the room.

"Daddy, dear," said Genevra softly. His eyes came to her understandingly, but slowly. "Dear daddy," she repeated, and put her hand on his. "Is there anything you want?"

His lips moved stiffly, but no sound came from them.

"Let me tell you, daddy. Mr. Homans is here. Would you like to see him? Close your eyes a minute if you mean yes."

Dorpoint obeyed her.

She turned her head and spoke to the doctor. Haslam went out on the errand, and when he had gone she went for one moment to Doctor Thurlow's side.

"He seems to understand," she said, and her brows questioned him.

"He is a very strong man, Mrs. England. He may even speak in a few moments. It is a magnificent rally, but it is the last. Trust me, he shall not be disturbed."

She thanked him with a look. Doctor Haslam brought Nelson Homans in by the far door, and she let him stand before her by the bed.

"Adam," said Homans, "you never did a thing that wasn't the right thing. I'm glad of a chance to tell you so. You leave Genevra to me, my friend. I'll take care of everything for her. England is dead, but I'm right here to take care of her." He took the heavily inert hand and pressed it hard.

"Good man," said Dorpoint in a raucous whisper.

Homans nodded with a smile, and stepped back from the bedside. Genevra was quickly in his place, and Dorpoint turned to look at her.

"Ogden," he said more distinctly.

"He is here, daddy. You remember I had sent for him? Is it something you want to say to him?"

"Yes."

"I'll send him in," said Homans from the door.

In the few minutes that he must wait, Dorpoint lay silent, making no effort to speak, but never taking his eyes from Genevra's face. And presently Jeremy Ogden came to stand behind her.

"Thank you for wanting me," he said simply.

"Nearer," said Dorpoint.

Ogden bent down, his face near Genevra's.

"That's it," said Dorpoint, with the ghost of his old smile.

Ogden caught his breath, and looked at her.

"Yes, that's it," said Genevra softly.

"You see I told him, Jerry—more than you told me. More than I could have told you."

He put his arm about her closely, but his eyes went back to Dorpoint.

"I'll take care of her," he said.

"You're going to get a lot of care, Jenny," said Dorpoint with a humorous look.

"Perhaps you ought not to talk much, daddy," she murmured, bending to kiss him softly and often on the face.

"I won't," he answered with significance. "Could I see Barbara?" His voice was failing again with the words. "Won't frighten her. Tell her I don't want to talk. I'd like—before—" He fell silent, but he pleaded with them.

"Of course, she'll come," said Ogden and went hurriedly away. There had come a sudden change in Dorpoint's face even with his last words that warned him to make haste.

The sick room was utterly quiet again. Geneva, her heart breaking, knelt by her father, fain to lay her head down on his breast and sob her grief, but keeping bravely calm for his dear sake. The doctors troubled him no more. Thurlow, indeed, went softly into the adjoining room to dismiss the waiting authorities.

"Mr. Dorpoint has spoken to his daughter. But he will not speak again," he said finally. "You would better go into some other part of the house." He came back as noiselessly as he had gone, with only a glance at the bed as he passed by.

Ogden came in at last with Barbara in his arms. She was round eyed, but not frightened. Daddy Dorpoint was sick, and she was sorry. She was to be very quiet and kiss him, but not to stay long.

Some of her instructions, however, evaporated from her mind as she was brought near the beloved face of her big friend, and kissed it. She struggled from her father's arms and clambered up, upon the bed, and patted Dorpoint with a tender hand.

His hand was in Geneva's, but he looked at Barbara.

"Poor Daddy Dorpoint, is you sick?" demanded Barbara, in tones condemning the powers that allowed such miscarriage of all justice. She regarded him gravely. "I'll tell you a say-it, and make you vell adain. Shall I?"

She leaned to look into his eyes, and then, sitting erect again, pushed back her curls, and began in her high, childish voice:

"Who killeded Cock Robin?
'I,' says ve sparrow—"

Dorpoint turned from her to look a moment at Geneva. A slight smile twisted his lips a little and he closed his eyes:

AFTER-DINNER bridge may be supplanted in the near future by an ancient Chinese game, Man-Jong, which is rapidly gaining devotees in the clubs and salons of London, Paris, and New York. Man-Jong is played with one hundred and thirty-four tiles, like dominoes, instead of our customary deck of cards, and the possibilities for heavy gains or losses are proportionately increased. If this game becomes a fashionable "indoor sport," the gold mesh bags will have to carry more than taxi fare, hereafter.

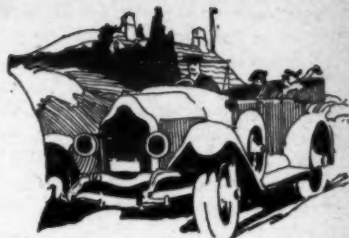
TEMPERAMENTAL in politics as in dancing, Isadora Duncan is now an avowed supporter of the new Russian government and has recently danced before Lenine, although not so long ago she danced the "Marseillaise" before Mr. Venizelos. However, her brother, Raymond Duncan, has satisfactorily solved the mystery of her political inconsistency.

"Isadora's right foot," he explained to a friend, "never knows what the left foot dances." *Voilà!*

Clonmoyle Returns

By Beatrice Ravenel

Author of "The High Cost of Conscience"



CLONMOYLE remembered his father as one remembers a holiday. He was something outside ordinary life, something in the nature of a treat. There was a delicious sense of danger about him, that was, when he tossed you miles in the air to meet prickly kisses. And he had smelled of a most masculine and exciting smell, compounded of leather and tobacco, and a tang of the stables, and a fine, clean savor of the open. The boy could hardly be said to miss his father, but he cherished, against all the evidence, the conviction that the older man might have made the way clear to him. At least, he might have given life a more wholesome explanation, instead of leaving it the nexus of contradictions that it seemed to be.

Lady Clonmoyle always mentioned her late husband in a formal, *nil nisi bonum* tone, from which Clonmoyle gathered that his father had been a great deal of trouble, and that, in consequence, they were, for people of their position, inconveniently poor. It took astute managing to live in England for the longer half of the year, near the well-established Surrey family from which his mother came, and to bring him up, as much as might be, like an Englishman.

To the reader of Lord Clonmoyle's work it may seem unbelievable that he attempted to live altogether in the common air of this planet, that he passed in a normal progression, through Eton and Sandhurst, and thence into the army.

He probably had his bad times before he learned conformity, but the serene carapace of manner which he had inherited helped, and so did his skill at games. At that, he was perilously near being a white blackbird. He started life in company with a devil of fastidiousness which demanded perfection. He was without the average boy's duck-like faculty for shedding unpleasant experiences. His dead past held wakes.

Even after he had stumbled across the threshold of Beauty, and become articulate, he failed to recognize his creative impulse as a part of himself. He called it his other world. It was so definitely at variance with this world.

There were times during Clonmoyle's career as a young officer and man about town when he deliberately repudiated his esoteric country. He was at a loose end. The routine duties of his profession bored him. At intervals he wrote, but there were such infinite opportunities of doing easier things. Distractions never had to be hunted for; they fawned upon his doorstep.

Then the jolt arrived. It was administered by Millie Fanshawe. Millie possessed a truly simian activity, not only in executing the dance, which had interested London, but in changing her whole point of view whenever her tree-top fancy became restless. With open mind she combined a pair of prehistoric eyes, full of the implication of beautiful thoughts that Millie ought to have had.

In his more cynical moments Clon-

moyle had wondered what the basic composition of his taste for Millie really might be, anyhow. He had decided that the test of passion was less its quality than its driving force. There was plenty of excitement about their relations, but besides that there was something which harmonized everything. He was twice himself, with the freedom of an unsuspected happiness, and he was for the first time in touch with life. There seemed no limit to the magic. It was during this phase that Clonmoyle launched his first book of poems, "Source of the Sea."

It had not occurred to him to marry Millie, but when he received a sudden wire announcing her marriage to Audley Rollins, one of his nearest friends, his sensibilities were outraged. Deprived of the relief of expression, and with the determination of being as miserable as possible, he got a few days' leave and buried himself at Castle Clonmoyle on the Irish coast, wrapping the rags of his thwarted fancy about him. He persuaded himself that he was frantically in love. A trickle of authentic anguish percolated into his correct verse. All day he wandered along the roads under the soft rain, in sight or, at least, in scent of the sea. He loved it as he might have cared for his mother, had she been lovable. By means of intensive thought he might in time have turned his exasperated nerves into the broken heartstrings he nicknamed them.

Then Leviathan swallowed all the little fishes.

There is no use in expatiating on Clonmoyle in the war. Nobody cares for such experiences. He went into it with a logical sense of fitness, of solution. Also, with a defiant premonition that he would be allowed to get everything out of it; that he was not to come back.

Clonmoyle did not come back.

What came back was a sick distaste,

a living disgust of life, a thing with the permanent vision of torture and decay in its memory.

It was not seemly that one set apart under an unclean curse should be run after, especially by pretty women. But he had returned to find himself a celebrity. He had to fight for his privacy. He had to watch himself. Anything brought the misery back—a word, a scent. Violets were fashionable at the moment. The dead, moldy subflavor of hothouse violets nauseated him.

The first thing that roused him from his apathy was the necessity of combating his mother's arrangements for his future. The new income taxes had torn Lady Clonmoyle's soul far more than the war had done. She laid before her son his plain duty. In spite of the impertinent offers of that American lecture company, he hardly counted upon making a fortune out of literature. She reminded him that Aileen O'Hara and her fortune had shown the liveliest disposition to jump at him. When convinced of the necessity, Lady Clonmoyle could be inelegant. Clonmoyle had smiled his thin, fine-drawn smile, and had murmured that he was not ready to be kept—yet. He had walked puppies with sturdy, pink-faced Aileen, and hunted and quarreled with her. He liked her far too well to give her a husband who had no spark of love in his heart for any living thing.

Millie? No, that had all gone.

He knew that Millie was in London. He had even caught sight of her across a crowded restaurant. She was said to be enduring her husband's continued absence with entire cheerfulness. He had avoided meeting her. But—why not? If there was any stimulant to be had, any drug, any solace, hadn't he a right to it? Just for the pulse of the old delirium through his veins, the unearthly, poetic shudder of passion—what wouldn't he give? He had forgotten how it felt!

As they drove through the dimly lighted street in St. John's Wood they were as much alone in their taxi as they would have been in the depths of a hidden room. It seemed impossible that she had not changed at all. Yet there was the same girlish fruitiness to her skin, the same tolerance. He could find no savor of Audley about her. With a groan of longing he took her in his arms.

He waited, holding his breath, for the sunrise, for the flooding warmth, that her nearness had never failed to bring him. Just another moment, and the nightmare of severance, of aloneness, would be broken through, and he would again be a man among men. All the way he held her close, wooing, not her, but his own reluctant delight.

"Here it is. Rather cozy, eh?" said Millie.

As they passed up the garden walk he got the impression of a tiny thing very well done, where marble pots took the place of flower beds, and a crafty effect of space was gained by means of a dense, trim-angled hedge. Through the dusk, a bird-bath fountain splashed, indecorously loud in the middle of the night.

"Hush!" whispered the leaf-lined walls. "Hush!"

She opened the house door and stood on the threshold, outlined in tender silver against the subdued light of the hall lantern. As he moved to follow her he suddenly paused and laid his hand on the iron railing of the brief flight of balcony steps.

She waited, smiling. No woman had ever required less saving of the face of an intimate situation than Millie. She had never for a second questioned his meaning. When she spoke he realized that she was offering him a comfortable stepping-stone from one moment to the next.

"You've never seen my little diggin's," she murmured.

Clonmoyle raised a face ghastly in the weak light.

"I'm not coming in," he said.

She stiffened. Her hurt monkey eyes, looking steadily into his, told him that she knew how her acquiescence had been flung back in her face. He made a gesture of quick remorse and protection.

"What made you do it, Millie? What made you do it?"

She understood.

"You never asked me to marry you," she said, a sullen thread of obstinacy in her tone. "A girl has to think of her future. Did it make you very unhappy? I hoped it would, Terry. I—don't now, I want—to make you—happy."

Her voice pursued him like long touches drawn over his cheeks. No, she could never make him happy again. Because of the tenderness that had been between them, he no longer wanted the cheap oblivion that she might bring him. It wasn't good enough. He had ceased to vibrate to anything better, but—not Millie.

A breeze flicked into the house, trailing out a scarf of perfume. Violets, violets. He lifted a look of sick aversion.

"I suppose—I suppose," she said in a hard, suffocating whisper, "you realize that you're doing awful things to my self-respect." The light laid a long, icy finger of green along her bare shoulder; a touch of mortality and decay. She shut him out.

The reason which Clonmoyle gave his mother for his sudden closing with the American lecture offer was in the nature of a boomerang. She had reminded him that his bank account needed plumping; she herself had put the bally idea into his head. In reality, he had left England because he felt crowded there; importuned by the eyes of three women.

A few days out he inadvertently and

almost grudgingly saved the life of a middle-aged, benevolent woman in an expensive fur coat, by bracing himself and forming an interference to her imminent plunge along a wet deck. He lived to regret his good turn because her gratitude expended itself in kind inquiries after his health, and in pressing offers to acquaint him with the best American literature. Her name was Mrs. Meres, and she came originally, and was manifestly proud of coming, from some Southern State which he associated dimly with alligators and occasions of historical tension. Among other tributes she forced upon him the gift of a thin volume of verses, indigenous to the same locality.

"You must promise me to read them," she urged. "I am sure you will love them because they do so remind me of yours."

Clonmoyle's subconsciousness registered a predetermination to loathe the putrid things. However, he read them. And, as a result, one of his first free acts in New York was to call on a certain publisher and demand information concerning Eric Forbes.

None was available. The name was a pen name. The author's identity the firm was under a pledge to withhold.

He knew the little book up, down, and through the cover, by the time his lectures were over. It tugged at him. He recognized irritably, yet with a curious humility, what Mrs. Meres had meant. There was in it a mind akin to the old Clonmoyle, that excellent young man who had died in Flanders, and sent this revenant home. But there was a lot more. There was the spirit of the man who had anguished and come through; the man who had brushed the black smoke of hell from his wings as he rose up to the sun; the better man that he, Clonmoyle, might have been.

It made him remember the whole-somness that was all around his father. It was amateurish and crude in spots,

but astonishingly wise, and full of startlingly natural things; things the heart marvels at because they are of the very substance in which it works.

The end of his contract found him physically worn out, wanting nothing but a quiet hole in which to be left to himself. Clonmoyle smiled at his sick man's fancy. He would pursue Mrs. Meres. She was the only clew he had to Eric Forbes, and Forbes was the only human being in the States whom he wanted to meet before he sailed for home. Somewhere about him there might be healing.

To Clonmoyle's jaded mind, his fellow creatures at Seminole Bay might have been merely aggressive shadows. He had walked into them all together, the first morning, with the indecent, public glare of the American sunlight beating upon them. A broad piazza swept reaches of wicker chairs and splashes of futurist color, right and left, toward the horizon. Mrs. Meres had greeted him with a cry of delight that was the prelude to vast introductions. With a sinking heart he looked around for a spot not too populous with human eyes. And then, with a sense of sudden, immense refreshment, he saw the girl.

She sat like a small, cool shadow, her thin, dark dress, the dusky masses of hair that swept around her faintly tinted face, even her delicately scowling brows, making her like a piece of disapproving twilight. She was glooming at a smartly groomed, sharply smiling woman whom some one had called Diana Allardyce.

"No, I don't approve," said the girl. Her attitude made the words superfluous. She swept the circle for a fresh outlet into which her grievance might debouch, and assailed the newcomer. "Do you think that those poor women in the fishing village ought to be asked to give anything to Mesopotamian relief?"

It simply scoops up the movie money and the children's ice-cream cones. Diana"—she turned a face of primitive hatred toward that finished product—"ought to be ashamed of herself."

"Couldn't you make it up to them some way?" soothed Mrs. Meres. And Clonmoyle definitely placed her. She would have tried to make it up to an uprooted sensitive plant shriveling in the pit. She had tried to make it up to him!

"No, Cousin Ellen, you couldn't. They're just as good as you are."

"Give them a party, Linda," the small, prettyish young man suggested. After one glance into the concentrated energy of the long-lashed eyes which saved him from insignificance, Clonmoyle suspected two things—that he was of the craft, and that he was a Clonmoyle worshiper. "You can give almost anybody a party."

The girl rose with a soft spring.

"The very thing." She pointedly addressed Miss Allardyce. "And I am not going to invite one single person from this hotel. Unless"—her extraordinarily deep, grave eyes plumbed Clonmoyle's soberly; for a second he had a dizzy sensation of diving into a consoling abyss of night—"unless—you will come."

As they walked down the path, he received a clairvoyant surmise of the group behind their backs. Mrs. Meres, her chin jerked forward; the young man, Waters, his name was, half jealous, half delighted with the human quality of the moment, Miss Allardyce's expression forming the chief ingredient of his joy. It said nakedly, "Now, why didn't I think of that?"

What moved Clonmoyle to do the things he did do, later in the afternoon, was the coercion of that fathomless first look from Linda Meres' eyes. He had somehow given it a blank check upon his feelings. Besides, he wanted to verify the impression.

5—Ains.

It was the absolute naturalness of the child, he told himself. There was a good simplicity about these people, even if, in Cousin Ellen's case, it had grown a bit overripe. Linda had picked him up as she would have picked up a nice dog who attracted her. Some island princess whose whim was as the order of nature, whose sense of obligation flowered out of her own heart, might have her directness. Most women lived in a state of reference to their surroundings. What were people saying; how would it look? This girl was obviously girdled, not by an artificial barrier, but by her own horizon.

The afternoon of the picnic ought, by every rule of probability, to have been a nightmare. There was a background of weather-beaten women, and a horde of young barbarians. Dogs abounded. There were games of an inconceivable noisiness. Everything swam in tepid ice cream. At the end of it he found himself telling Irish fairy tales. Waters' anxious head bent beside him told him how well he was doing it, and how appallingly strange it was that he should be doing it at all. The shrill, uncontrolled child voices urged him on and on until the late twilight fell and the outer rim of mothers drew in and called their broods home.

As he lingered under the stars for a last smoke that night he realized that he had not hated it at all. A dog had followed him, an amorphous specimen of the *famille jaune*, a sort of international episode of a dog. He had been vaguely flattered. Linda had patted the dog. Linda had patted everybody. She had held things together, like—music, perhaps.

After this adventure, however, he withdrew definitely into his shell. He found that he could rent from the hotel a tiny cottage, some distance from the pullulating piazzas and surrounded with the sort of garden that puts up

with sea air. It was hedged with brilliant pink oleanders like giantesses' bouquets, interspersed with water cedars that trailed tired feathers on the ground. O'Grady, his soldier servant, fetched his meals directly from the kitchen. He had always the pretext of the book that he was supposed to be writing. It amused him that the hotel world should consider that he owed it a pretext for his solitude.

For a few days he lived like a hermit. Then his own society became too heavy a burden. He wrote only brief and bitter verses that dissatisfied him acutely. The barrenness of his intellect terrified him. If his gift of God, his faculty of making beauty his own, was still his he might adjust a kind of life with it. But his other world had sunk beneath the horizon. If he had lost it for always, what was there left?

He hated the long, prosaic afternoons, but every day before sunset he walked along the beach, past the summer colony, the fishing village, and into the emptiness beyond. The international dog generally walked back with him. O'Grady, who knew all about dogs, had disparaged her ancestry and opined that, like *Mariana*, she was sickening of a vague disease and had better be left alone; but, being incapable of resisting a dog, had encouraged her visits by feeding her bountifully.

Clonmoyle's walk usually ended at a cluster of rocks that inclosed a miniature lagoon where every tide left a new reflection of the sky. At low tide it became cut off from the sea, and still. It gave a mystic feeling of unreality to stand at its edge and look miles down into the heavens below him, the thrill of being hung between two skies.

As he came nearer the place one afternoon, he saw that he was not to have it to himself. Poised on the arm of a savage throne of rocks, Linda stood against the light. He had noticed how lightly and symmetrically she was built,

but now, as the wind blew her dress tightly against her, his breath stopped for an instant in his throat. She was youth and the unconscious joy in life and the spring impulse and the upper air. And she had something to do with him. She was native to him.

As he seated himself on the rocks below her habitual gravity folded her like the drooping of wings.

"I thought this was mine," she said.

"Can't you spare me a bit of it?"

"Which will you have?" She indicated the flushing depths above and the replica beneath them, with one of her chary, eloquent gestures, that reminded him of a barely waving honeysuckle.

"Some of each, please."

"You're not quite at home in either? Neither am I." She plucked up his thought by the roots. After all, women felt themselves at liberty to make pseudoconfidences to writing chaps. They were always doing it.

He sought cover.

"How is your cousin?" he asked politely.

"Cousin Ellen? She isn't, you know. She's my stepmother. Isn't she a dear? She said that she thought 'cousin' covered such a multitude of sins. I couldn't have called her mother. One doesn't forget so soon."

"She very kindly gave me a book by Eric Forbes—awfully jolly stuff. She couldn't or wouldn't tell me his real name. Comes from your country. Perhaps you know."

"I—think I can guess," said Linda slowly. "Aren't they—young?"

"I liked them. As you say here, they hit the spot. It isn't your pig-headed, optimism-in-advance kind. It's the residuum, after everything else has volatilized away. Like a man being buried alive, smiling as the last sod is laid over his mouth, and muttering that, after all, life was worth while." He stopped short at her little smile of horror and mystery. "It isn't Waters?"

he asked incredulously. "He is clever enough, but——"

The girl turned her head.

"I can't tell—yet."

It was plainly a case of no thoroughfare. Clonmoyle turned his attention to the sunset, silvering to gray. The ripples sent pale streaks over the mirror below.

"It's turning white in a single night," murmured Linda. Then, as though the ripples had established the transition, she added: "Isn't life worth while? Aren't you glad to be alive?"

"No," answered Clonmoyle bluntly.

"My spirit is too weak—mortality weighs heavily on me." He stopped. Who was this girl? All he knew was that she had picked up the key of his mind, and that her daring fingers were busy with the wards. It seemed to him that she held the truth, turning it in her hands like a clouded crystal.

"I see," she said gently. Her tone brought an obscure comfort.

"I doubt it," Clonmoyle contradicted with an unmirthful laugh. "No one who has not suffered could possibly see it. You are too young, and—inexperienced." The quiet glance she turned on him made him vaguely ashamed. "Who are you?" he asked abruptly. "How do you find things out?"

"Nobody in particular. Just Linda." She smiled faintly. "I've never told anybody, but if suffering is the qualification, I think I have the right to speak, to understand."

"You? No!" said Clonmoyle incredulously. He spoke not so much to her as to destiny. That she should have been unhappy was the worst arraignment yet.

"When Cousin Ellen fell in love with us—she said it was with both of us—she told me that I knew less about the outside world and more about the inside one than anybody she had ever met. And all I knew I told nakedly. She taught me repression, and how to talk

about the weather; but literally, as my French teacher conversed with me in French later. And she said that I ought to go to boarding school. She didn't want to get rid of me, she really wanted me, but she said that I ought to be socialized. I hated it. It seemed so—silly, for me to go to school. There didn't seem anything for me to learn. I knew all that a woman could know."

"What?" said Clonmoyle.

"Do you know anything about poverty?"

"We were poor. There are crowds of poor gentlefolk in Ireland."

"But you don't know poverty on a Southern plantation. With us you can raise enough to eat; you're not cold or hungry; you always have some sort of servants, of course. But you never have any clothes or books, except the classics in the library, and if you are proud, like daddy, and won't go to people's houses because you can't entertain them, you have no society. And you have no horses where a lack of horses means isolation. It was such a sweet old place, too. I used to think that it wore its wistaria like purple tatters. We had no money, no money at all. I've often wondered whether if we had had my mother would have died."

"It was just a little while after my little sister was born. And I and an old negro who, as she said, 'lef' what she didn't understan' to Gawd, had to take care of the baby."

"How old were you?" asked Clonmoyle.

"I was fifteen. I'm twenty now. Do you know what the most awful feeling in the world is? It's the feeling of responsibility you have—with a baby. For a while I hardly slept. I would wake when I did, every little while, and hang over her to feel if she was still breathing. They have such *little* lives sometimes. I didn't dare to leave her to old Sheba; her ideas of remedies and all that were Chinese."

"Your father ought never to have allowed it. It was outrageous," said Clonmoyle angrily.

"Poor daddy, what could he do? It was all right until—she began to teethe in the middle of a hot spell. And then, I had to watch her wasting away. Just a little while after—she left us, all the money came. The doctor assured me, over and over, that nothing could have been done, but I've always felt that if we had been rich enough to take her to a cooler place, something might have been. But it was all too late."

"Things generally are."

"Cousin Ellen came on a visit to the Waters', near us. She was the person who suspected that there was oil in the neighborhood, and had the experts down. We really are the yellowest sort of rich, you know; except that we used to be rich before, long ago, which may take off some of the curse. But first she had fallen in love with us, because we were so easy to take care of, I suppose. My father was the most delightful, inefficient sort of person, and she decided everything for him. They were ideally happy. We lost him two years ago, but his story ended well.

"But for a long time she couldn't do anything for me. Then she found out that I was torturing myself for fear that it had been my fault—about the baby—something I had done or hadn't done. Oh, those long, long nights, with the jasmine pouring into the window, and the dogs howling, and the trees talking awful things! I used to feel accursed. Sometimes I think that I couldn't have been quite sane. I know now that Cousin Ellen wanted to get me among other girls. And I wasn't a girl any longer. I had had my baby, and lost my baby. What more was there for me to learn?

"I was terrified, too, at going among strange people. I knew that I was different, and I was afraid that they would laugh at me. But Cousin Ellen

had been lovely to me. She said that in a trouble like mine there must be something good, and the way to find it was not to shut yourself up and brood until your heart corroded, but to go among normal people and see how much kindness there was in the world. She said that in loving somebody else better than I loved myself I had learned the very core of life. That the only people to be really pitied were those who couldn't suffer, the hard, smug people who didn't care enough."

"Perhaps," muttered Clonmoyle.

"Oh, yes!"

As he looked up he could see the stars shining through her hair, like the exquisite sign of this virgin motherhood. Then his mouth twisted in its sardonic grimace. Yes, that was exactly what Cousin Ellen would have said, the invariable "glad" patter that bubbled so spontaneously to her lips. He could hear her saying it.

"So I went to school to please her, and, after a while, I got to be a girl again, somehow. The awful pain went out of my memory, and only the good things stayed. I wouldn't have been without my baby for the world, even—as it was."

"The good things," said Clonmoyle. "There were no good things in my experience to remember." He did not say it aloud, but as she turned to him he knew that she had taken up his case again.

"There is no way of *proving* that there is any source of goodness in the universe. You have to feel it."

"How do you feel it?"

"You love somebody more than you love yourself. Then you know. You can't bring yourself to trust that one to anything less than—than— Oh, you know!"

"Oh, love!" he broke in harshly. "A man's associations with love may be unfortunate."

There was a silence before she answered.

"I've often thought that. You see, a girl's first knowledge of love is generally all mixed up with her ideals. A man's isn't always."

"God knows it's not," said Clonmoyle.

He picked up a pebble and slung it into the uneasy pool. The circles wore tiny edges of phosphorescence, just perceptible in the gathering dusk. He was well aware that Linda ought to consider it time to go home, but the wish to hurry her was far from his thoughts.

"So," he summed up, "I am to understand that, as you diagnose my case, my only hope is a grand passion that will justify, to my mind, God's ways to man. I shall not have to search for arguments, I shall merely have to give myself to the impulse and be carried over by my emotion like that breaking wave there. But I'm talking like a beast. It's been awfully good of you to tell me." He fumbled for words not too inadequate. "You have helped. To know you are all kinds of help. What do you want me to do? Flock with the normal crowd in the hotel? I'll begin to-morrow: Waters, and Miss Allardyce—"

Her trill of laughter brought a smile from him. He threw back his head and filled his lungs with the good briny air. The girl slipped down to the water and dipped her fingers. He leaned beside her and scooped up a handful of the glittering, dangerous-looking stuff. A swift, magnetic current seemed to stab him so that he was as conscious of her joy as of his own. His atrophied senses could not have achieved it alone. Like a shock of surprise came the remembrance of happiness, of beautiful things and the possession of them.

That night he dragged a wicker armchair to the wet grass that winked under the stars. The forlorn dog slunk

beside him, with the deprecating acknowledgment that the shadow there had only been left by accident and not for her intrusive use.

"Ye faymale crayture that nobody wants," muttered O'Grady. "An' is it you to be squattin' by himself—just like the rest of thim?"

An intermittent wind shook out flavors of salt-soaked leaves and the sharp little pinks in the borders. Clonmoyle hummed a phrase; then again, a bit differently. A song was trying to wriggle out of the chrysalis of his mind. Abruptly he leaned back into the clasp of the night which was speaking for him more subtly than any phrase he could utter. What night had ever been so unguarded, so disarmed?

He sat up suddenly, grasping the arms of his chair. As a man wakes, he came to himself from the depths of his old, trance-like reverie, what he had called his "submerging" in the sea of his imagination. He had got it again! The lost way was open!

"Good little friend, good little pal," he said aloud. The dog gave a grunt of heartbreaking gratitude, but he hadn't meant the dog.

The untainted air of the sea was in his nostrils. At his elbow a dark rose swung faintly in the breeze. For lack of something better, he closed his palm over it. His brain was filled with its sweetness. He was clean. He was whole!

"Well, anyway," Miss Allardyce's voice swung around the corner of the piazza, "these Meres, though very good 'country aristocracy,' never have been considered one of the sacred families. And international matches are by no means popular, I can tell you that much. Mrs. Fox-Welling had an American grandmother, and do you know that she was never mentioned—"

Clonmoyle rose and strolled out of earshot.

It was, he told himself, exactly what he ought to have anticipated. He had been with Linda altogether too often. He had lived obstinately in the present, declining even to consider terminations. A man rescued from a raft in mid-ocean hardly concerns himself with the details of his future. He eats and grasps the hands of his fellows and thanks God.

After all, though, was marriage a detail? The humor of the question reconciled him somewhat to its intrusion. It would have been more consonant with his habits had he shut himself into his garden to think the matter over. Instead he sat down on a bench which was placed under a beach umbrella on what should have been the hotel lawn, but was largely a sandy waste. He wanted no atmosphere of glamour, rather the feeling of hard reality about him, as uncompromising as the line of blue shade cutting into the naked ground. With an effort of the will; he visualized the future; his life at home, half in his own circle where the great world bounded him, on one side, and the world of letters on the other; half in his mother's guarded family party. In the latter, at least, Linda would be received on sufferance. But his old life, taken up where he had left it? His life—without Linda?

That was answer enough. In the hot, bright sunshine Clonmoyle shivered. He needed her as a man needs his very means of living.

But Linda? What would she think about it?

He could accurately appraise all that he might offer a woman. The flattery of their eyes had been frank enough in telling him. Perhaps nothing but his poet's fundamental realization of the curious instability and pathos of life had saved him from becoming a fatuous puppy. But he was also aware that to Linda the deeps had opened. She knew the real values. She would

allow herself nothing less than the best. She had been mercifully kind to him, but when she yielded it would be not to the love of any man, but to her own. On that bare bed rock of integrity where she stood, and where he once or twice had stood with her, the inner sanction alone would move her. She would marry him only if she wanted him as he wanted her.

If she did! The sunlight on the water dazzled his fixed gaze. For an instant the sense of what her love might be enveloped him, lifted him off his feet, shattered him like a breaking wave.

Of what happened next he preserved a most peculiarly freakish memory. The central incident he did not see at all. When the scene came back to him, as it continued to do vividly for a long time, he became aware first of the sharp, violet shadows in a white skirt, and the sharp sound of Miss Allardyce's voice, for once stridently natural and uncontrolled, saying the same thing over and over. Just in front of him as he turned swept a rush of people from the piazza. The air was full of jumbled colors and words. Then the shocking crack of a pistol, once, twice. Then O'Grady, with the instinct of long habit, at attention to report.

"She was makin' straight for you, me lord, like she always does—the little dawg. Foamin' at the mouth she was. Sickenin' she's been this long time. An' the young leddy——"

Miss Allardyce began again, the same unreconciled, astonished words:

"She put her arm right in its mouth! She put her arm *right* in its mouth!"

"'Twas the only way to stop her, sorr," O'Grady said quietly. He moistened his creased lips with his tongue. Kneeling down, he laid his pistol beside him. He turned the dog over and studied it, his comedy face screwed into an intent frown. "She's not mad, to my thinkin'," he announced. "But 'twould do no harm to cauterize

the young leddy's arm. More like a fit, it was."

Then at last the crowd gave way and Clonmoyle saw Linda.

"What made you do it?" he asked. It seemed his inevitable question to women. He heard Waters utter a queer little gulp of laughter.

O'Grady, back again with incredible speed, was at his elbow, thrusting something upon him.

"Will you do ut, sorr? You've done it, you mind, at home, the time thim Flynn childern was bit. 'Twill take time to get the doctor. Him an' the ould leddy drove by a while back. They were going to the village. It should start even with the poison, if any. No, miss; no, ma'am," he reassured the commotion still surging around them, "she wasn't mad, only furiouslike. But anny dog's bite is a thing not to neglect."

Clonmoyle took the case with steady fingers. Something like a calm, bracing hand laid itself on his brain, holding off reality until he should have done what he had to do. Or did it perhaps rather focus the immediate fact like a spotlight, merely numbing his personal reaction to it? Something held back the gush of his feeling like a tight grasp on a severed artery.

He made a thorough job of it. Little raw ledges and edges inside the small, red wounds—tiny jagged ambuscades where horror might lurk—little folds to be lifted. Once she moaned. She ought, of course, to scream. Most people did. He knew that she never moved her gaze from him, but he looked up from his work only when it was done and, with a cold, angular accuracy of movement, he had adjusted the bandage. Then their eyes met; their thoughts rushed together and clinched.

She lay cowering in the chair under the umbrella where he had placed her, her feet curled together. Her face was

wiped of color, her mouth was twisted, and from its corners two new, deep, gray lines were scored. But her eyes gazed into his with a passionate exaltation. Agony had opened the gates of a mystic acceptance of the suffering from which she had saved him. With an unsuspected abasement of spirit Clonmoyle took it in. She was looking at him like that because she had no crucifix to look at.

At his abrupt, unconscious gesture the group fell back, and left his way clear. Lifting her in his arms, he carried her across the lawn, down the piazza, and into the dark little writing room at the end. Then, as he stood with her over the lounge, about to lay her down upon the cushions, his arms, acting quite of their own volition, refused to let her go. He felt her hold her breath, waiting like the turn of the tide, in exquisite joy and fear, for his inevitable kiss.

With a child's whimper she turned her face against his. And here he learned more about Linda. Under the fiery torment she had not cried, but she was shaking under the touch of his lips.

"I'm not worth your while," he said fiercely. "I'm a rotter. I've done things— It's not that I can't forget them; I have, practically. But if you knew them I never could forget. So I shall never tell you. But I love you—love you! Don't make any mistake about that. And if you'll put up with me, I'll love you and be true to you to the end, so help me God."

Her wet lashes flickered on his cheek in a start of incredulous wonder.

"Oh, no," she said earnestly, "you don't *love* me."

"Don't I?"

"No. How could you?"

Clonmoyle laughed out. This was, after all, the ultimate charm of his Linda, this touch of delicious absurdity that sent a ripple over her most serious moments, this way of saying just what

she felt, that was so different from the ways of other women.

"No?" he queried. "Then will you kindly tell me why I've been flocking with you all this time—*following* you, just like Mary Jane and her policeman?"

He had the instinct to keep the froth on the moment, the bubble on the strong

wine that was going to his head. If he let himself go, Heaven knew what he might say. He wouldn't frighten her.

"Why," came the faltering voice over his pounding heart, "why, of course, I thought—I thought you knew! I thought you had guessed that I was—Eric Forbes!"



DOCTOR AMY KAUKONEN, pretty young mayor of Fairport, Ohio, effectually suppressed the ardent proposals of one of her numerous suitors. After several desperate letters which failed to bring a reply from the harassed mayor, he telegraphed frantically:

"If I fail to get a favorable reply from you by next Tuesday, I shall jump off Brooklyn Bridge."

The mayor's answer was brief, but to the point:

"Why wait until Tuesday?"



THAT Paris, the "glass of fashion," does not always reflect impeccable taste in women's dress is revealed by the acidulous prophecy of a Frenchman who has his own opinion about that much-mooted question, according to the *Literary Digest*.

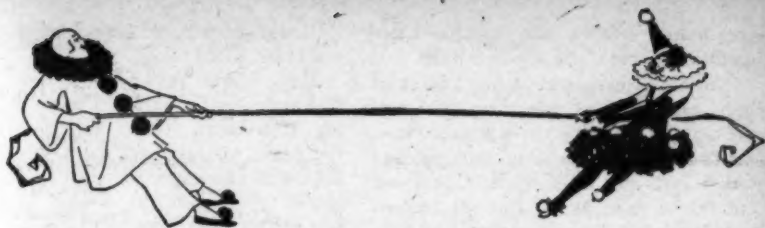
"When women have so far improved that there seems nothing left to criticize about them men will still be able to criticize their dress," he maintains, "for they will always be wearing too much or too little."



CLARE SHERIDAN, the noted sculptress, was greatly concerned because American women never associated with men. At least, it seemed to her that they didn't. She was invited to teas, luncheons, even dinner parties where she met—only women. And then there were numerous clubs—just for women. Puzzled and, yes, troubled, she finally put the question to a brilliant gathering of—women.

"Don't you ever go about with men," she asked, "you know, to dinner or tea or the theater?"

"Well," answered an attractive author, bent on relieving Mrs. Sheridan's obvious anxiety, "I've had two invitations to dine with men, anyway. You see, I've been married twice."



Peril

By Winston Bouvé

Author of "The Romantic Lady," "Rotten Wood," etc.

CHAPTER I.

SOME are born to chance adventures, gay intrigues, just as others are marked by Destiny for a drab and sedate journey. Adventure had always lured Jacqueline Herron by the magnetic loadstone of fate. It was her heritage, after all; for she was the last of the Carolina Herrons, a graceless, gallant race of bold men and beautiful women in whose veins ran the wine of conquest, the blood of the De Courvains, by a daughter of that proud house.

And, like them, she was gallant and graceless, bold and beautiful. Gallant enough to fling the last of her share of the depleted Herron fortune into her brother's unworthy hands when he involved himself to the point of ruin; graceless, always, in her dealings with the men who adored her—Lord, how mercilessly she ensnared them, and played with them, and tossed them aside when she was done with the game! Bold and beautiful, with shining, topaz eyes and a challenge on her rose-red mouth that stirred every man who saw her to desire—and dreams as well; and a penchant for the maddest escapades.

Such was the girl who, to the amazement of the smart, swift set in New York to which she belonged—by grace of Mrs. Myron Harte, her cousin-in-

law and social sponsor—had smiled upon middle-aged Edmund Fanning, tantalized him with more hope than she had ever given any man but one—and let him place upon her slim hand the great diamond that glitteringly proclaimed her his to their world.

It was incomprehensible. The paunchy clubman would never again cut a romantic or dashing figure, certainly; he was not the type to charm even an unsophisticated girl fresh from boarding school, much less supersophisticated, twenty-six-year-old Jacqueline; and he had a taste for full-blown, bare-backed beauties of the chorus; a passion for superior food and drink, and a still greater passion for that most practical of earthly pleasures, money.

Heaven knew Jacqueline had never before shown evidence of mercenary or even practical intent. She'd flung right and left chances that would turn another girl jade-green with envy. But such folly must come to a close sooner or later; and Jacqueline's had obviously been discarded at last for—a flawless solitaire.

Oddly enough, the cynical triflers of her world, used as they were to such bargains, were aghast at her engagement. People loved Jacqueline, for her adventurous youth, her beauty, her flair

for living. When she cheated these qualities of hers, she cheated them.

Nelson Carey, a nice young adorer of hers and Julie Harte's brother, expressed bitterly what most people felt.

"If it were any one but Jacque! Other girls get up against it, and sell out in the same way. But she seemed different—the sort of girl who'd fling over everything for the one man's sake, if you want to be romantic about it. Or carry out any dare-deviltry that popped into her reckless, black head! She's too ripping good a sport to make a trade like that, Julie. Or, rather, she isn't. Which hurts worse!"

He was unbosoming himself to his sister in her apricot breakfast room, a week or so before the wedding was to take place. It was to take place, incidentally, in the huge drawing-rooms downstairs. Julie Harte adored staging social events!

She gazed reflectively into her chocolate, vowed to herself that an ascetic luncheon should balance it and the forbidden muffin she had just consumed, and rose to the defense.

"You inconsistent sentimentalist! If it's her dare-deviltries you men all adore her for, then stamp her marriage with your approval. It's the maddest of them all!" Her tone did not veil her distaste for the copper prince.

Carey laughed.

"Between us two, Sis, is it adventure she finds in Fanning's rotund tummy and pocketbook? Is her marriage another—romantic folly? The phrase is hers; she used it on me toward the end of the Bermuda episode last spring!"

He lounged over to the half-open French windows that overlooked the newly verdant Park, essayed a whistled tune. His sister, a charmingly plump little person with Titian hair that was as becoming as it was obviously henhaed, went over to him, linked her soft arm affectionately in his.

"I warned you, old dear. Jacqueline's not to be flirted with!"

Mrs. Harte remembered very well that month in Bermuda. From a charming, if eccentric, young Englishman on the boat, who showed more discretion than might be expected when Jacqueline smiled upon him, to Nelson himself, when he came down for the last ten days of their stay on the islands, it had been a series of episodic affairs. Glamorous, moonlit hours; long rides into the island country; dips into an opalescent sea by dawn—Jacqueline was expert at staging such shared pleasures, just as she was expert at making a man forget the existence of another woman.

"Not by a penniless, briefless lawyer chap!"

Satisfied Julie Harte, who had long ago chosen riches instead of romance—and had never regretted the choice—caught her breath. Perhaps it was the May morning, abloom in the Park below her windows, that momentarily made it seem rather terrible to her, too, that anything as bright and beautiful and full of adventurous zest as Jacqueline should fall to the sleek, copper magnate's lot.

"She isn't marrying Fanning for his money," she cried out in answer to her brother's bitter suggestion. "I'm sure of that, Nelson."

A peal of delicious laughter rang through the room: Jacqueline's laughter; and Carey, crimsoning, wheeled, to find the girl poised between the brocade portières.

"Speaking of angels," she murmured mirthfully. "Julie, have you been defending me long?"

Her dancing eyes, golden under the arched, black brows that lent a look of perpetual query to her unusual beauty, glinted pleasurably at their confusion. She dropped into a chair, peeled off her suede gloves, and placed a cigarette between her lips for young Carey to light.

"You minx!" said Mrs. Harte. "I

have, but you don't deserve it. Jacqueline, tell Nelson you aren't marrying for a bag of gold and nothing else! Look at the boy. He's grieving and grumping over you—which you don't deserve, either."

It was difficult to be properly furious with Julie. Carey, who was helpless in her hands, shrugged, and laughed rather joylessly.

"Your friends take you seriously, Jacques."

"As an adventuress? Honor bright, Julie, I'm not marrying for—a bag of gold and nothing else."

She flicked the ash from her cigarette; a secret, subtle change had come over her mobile beauty; a hardening process as if, at her own wish, she was transformed from flesh and blood to some precious, unmalldable metal.

"There are plenty of other things, you know. A yacht; notorious pearls—they'll make me look rather brown, I'm afraid; a house on the right side of the Park; motors and summer places and closets full of ravishing clothes!"

Carey crossed the room, and the apricot hangings rustled into place after him.

"I won't have it!" cried Julie Harte. "Jacques, you mustn't go through with it. You don't care about these things. You're making a frightful, frightful blunder, and you won't know until it's too late. I've been mad to listen to you for a minute. You shan't marry the man from my house, so there!"

"Then," sighed Jacqueline, contemplating her lissom, crossed ankles, "we'll have to elope. And at our years of discretion an elopement isn't nearly as effective as a Roman-holiday wedding. Besides, my gown has come from Lucile. You wouldn't do me out of my one chance to wear it!"

Mrs. Harte slipped two fingers under Jacqueline's impertinent chin, tilted up the perfect, oval face. There was an extraordinarily tender look in her china-

blue eyes; the mother look childless women lavish on what they love.

"I've known you since you were a funny little pigtailed girl, all eyes and hair and scratches from brambles you would plunge through. Dear little make-believe cousin, keep out of this thicket! If it is money you want, come to me. I've quantities, and I'm horribly lonely in this big house. I've told you that a thousand times, Jacques. But don't marry Ned Fanning. It isn't too late!"

"It's two months too late." Jacqueline sprang up, put her friend's soft hands aside. "Don't make it hard for me, Julie. I'm pledged."

Julie stamped like a pettish child.

"As if you hadn't broken a dozen engagements before! Send him flying, and come to me."

"You know I can't let you keep me like a pedigreed Pom!"

"You'd let Fanning keep you!"

Jacqueline flung out her hands, palms up, in a graceful little Latin gesture that had come to her from her French grandmother.

"Certainly not! He gets me in return for a most reasonable consideration."

"For a yacht, and pearls, and real estate," said Julie Harte in queer, flat tones. "If it were any one but you, Jacques!"

The girl, whose glazed assurance had worn brittle and thin dropped the fragile mask suddenly. Behind it was a creature goaded beyond endurance; desperate, at bay.

"For sixty thousand dollars, Julie. The price of my brother's freedom! Of his honor, and mine. It's worth more than that, isn't it?"

She struck the carved chair back with a small, passionate fist, rushed on.

"It's a shameful, sordid story. I can't very well explain that I'm marrying to keep Paul out of a prison cell, can I? Well, it's the truth, now that you've dragged it out of me. Things haven't

been going well in Raleigh; when I went South in February it was to find—disaster. Everything that could be sold, was sold. He soon told me why. He'd been—misappropriating funds of the lumber company where he had the position of cashier. He'd taken advantage of his opportunity to 'borrow' enough to cover his losses at race track and gaming table!"

Jacque caught her breath in a sob, went on tumultuously.

"He had stolen eighty thousand dollars of the company's money before they found the leakage, Julie. And between us we couldn't scrape up more than twenty thousand to save our necks! Luckily, the vice president of the concern had been a friend of father's. That was all that kept Paul out of jail. Think of it! I went to him, promised payment, implored his—mercy. And I got the money from Edmund Fanning within a week."

"Why didn't you come to me?" Julie demanded, stricken with the horror of the thing. "Or to any one, rather than Fanning?"

"Because I knew I could never pay back the money. Because he was the only man I knew who would accept payment in—other coin," said the girl who was about to marry Edmund. The torrent of her grief and shame had spent itself. She dabbed at her small, straight nose with a minute puff discovered in the recesses of her mesh bag.

"Let me send the beast a check," implored Myron Harte's widow. "You can't stick to such a bargain!"

"If I don't," said Jacqueline slowly, looking down at the flowering broom in the Park through a mist of tears, "I'll be cheating him just as much as Paul cheated the lumber company. One of us must stick to something!" Wet eyed, she flung a gallant, tremulous smile over her shoulder.

"Don't look so sorry, Julie darling. It isn't a tragedy, you know. If Paul

wasn't to be considered I might easily have come to the same thing. There's a yacht and pearls and Paris gowns in the offing—and I'm not in love with any one else!"

"You'd never in the world have done it!" cried her friend. "You know those aren't the things you want. Jacque dear, have you counted the cost? How are you going to live without glamour and romance and all your gay adventures? They aren't to be bought, any of them! What have you in their place?"

"Twelve May days." Jacqueline stood framed in the morning light, glinting in it as the sun struck the sheen of the feathers in her delightfully impudent hat, the bronze color of her crêpe frock, her buckled shoes. Her swift, birdlike grace, the shimmer of her, suggested a humming bird hovering over a garden. "Gift of the Magi!"

The telephone shrilled from its hiding place of a lady's hoop skirts, and Mrs. Harte picked it up.

"Of course, I remember you," she was assuring some one cordially a moment later. "How nice of you to look me up as soon as you landed. Miss Herron? Why, yes, she is staying at the Ambassador. She is immersed in trousseaux, of course. Yes, didn't you know? On the twenty-sixth, to a Mr. Fanning. Really? Do come to see me if you can make it—on the wing, as it were? That would be charming. At four, then. Good-by."

She turned, a curious, pleased little smile on her mouth.

"That was the Honorable Lawrence Taite, Jacque. He arrived yesterday on the *Carpathia* for a month in New York—on account of you, of course. He's fresh from Africa and lion hunting."

Lawrence Taite was the cool young Englishman who hadn't permitted Jacqueline to wreak her usual damage upon his susceptibilities during the two days on the Bermuda boat the previous

spring, and who had even evaded her at the hotel.

Jacqueline smiled too. An innocent little smile that meant a great deal; scarcely a smile, indeed. A parting of her lips, faint, pleased, provocative; the fleet suggestion of a dimple to the left of her mouth, a far-away, happy gleam in her topaz eyes.

"What fun!" she murmured, clasping a slender knee. "He's a very nice young man, Julie."

"And you're all but another man's bride," suggested Mrs. Harte. "Jacque, if you're going to marry Fanning you oughtn't to make a fool of him beforehand. You do owe him that much! Besides, it's *verboten*. And risky."

Jacqueline flung back her head, laughing a little. She always laughed at risk.

"I owe him—one promissory note, dated twelve days ahead, Julie," she corrected. "Twelve days!"

CHAPTER II.

And so it happened that while Sunday supplements were featuring the important Herron-Fanning wedding that was to be the event of the month, and charming photographs of Jacqueline were appearing in this column and that, with satisfying references to her beauty and position—being cousin and protégée of Mrs. Myron Harte secured that—Jacqueline herself continued to play the fool.

That was the way old Mrs. Venner put it after she came upon Jacque and a personable young man with impertinent gray eyes, not unlike Jacqueline's own in their laughter-loving depths, and the manners of a princeling, in a secluded corner of a secluded dining room that was staidly dull enough in itself to be compromising, as a rendezvous. The hour was absurd. One doesn't linger in a stupid place over the débris of tea until after seven unless one's companion is the main attraction. And the

gray-eyed young man quite obviously was the main attraction, so far as Jacqueline was concerned.

What made it awkward was the fact of Mrs. Venner's being Edmund's aunt. Yet, as she took pains to relate that evening over her after-dinner bridge, she was the only one of the trio who seemed to sense the awkwardness of the situation.

Jacqueline delighted in it; to the point of continuing to flout every convention that had ever been established for brides and near-brides. The Honorable Larry Taite, who had acclimated himself to the odd arrangement in four days—Jacque had lost no time in her new, and last, intrigue—evidently considered it piquant enough to be worth while, although he was a young man with a purpose, and Jacqueline's wedding struck him as an impotent conclusion, too hastily arrived at. And Edmund Fanning, who was rushing through a copper deal in order not to lose anything by his two-months' honeymoon trip, drooped his heavy eyelids and counted the days.

So did Jacque.

"Six left, Larry," she caroled on the morning he breakfasted in her diminutive apartment west of Central Park after they had cantered along the intricate bridle paths for an early hour.

Taite was at his best in riding clothes; he had a certain boyish grace, an indolent poise, that unconventional attire became. Just now he seemed nothing in the world but an amiable, fair-haired boy on leave from college or university.

"You jolly well know you won't go through with it," he assured her cheerfully. It was a tacit rule of the game that neither he nor she should diverge from it.

She rang for the darky maid she had imported from North Carolina. The girl came in with the morning mail, which amused Jacque immeasurably these days. It was composed of artful

pleas for her patronage from decorators, stationers, dressmakers, florists—not a few of whom had been dunning her consistently before the announcement of her engagement was made.

"You know I will!"

She took off her soft, velours riding hat, tossed it upon the piano top, ran through the impersonal print of her correspondence.

Taite strode over to where she stood, took possession of her slim, busy hands.

"Then why in the devil are you making a fool of me?"

For the first time he spoke seriously of her approaching marriage. Jacqueline, acutely conscious of the hard, brown hands that pinioned hers, challenged him with sweet, provocative eyes.

"Two's company. I'm making a fool of me, too. You're hurting!"

"Why?"

She laughed; I have already mentioned what a delightful thing her laughter was. And if the man had not felt the quickened pulse beat in her wrist—it thrilled him savagely, that tiny betrayal—her rippling mirth, her insolent, curved lips and bright, hard eyes might have gained her effect.

"Why do you plunge into Africa after lions and elephants that you don't want?" she demanded. "Is it just the—lure of the chase?" She couldn't keep a hint of wistfulness from her voice.

Taite shook his close-cropped, blond head.

"It's more than that," he acceded thoughtfully. "It's the lure of chance—the chance of not coming out with a whole skin, or any skin, for that matter. Danger's the lure; the loadstone." He lifted whimsical brows. "Peril's a jade, but a few of us stay faithful to her, as long as we last."

"As long as we last," echoed Jacqueline. The conscious lure had left her wide, gold-flecked eyes. She saw that

he understood. The knowledge elated her oddly.

"So that's my answer," he mused, relinquishing her hands. His lips tightened as she started at sound of the bell. Fanning? He might have a habit of dropping in on his way downtown.

But it was not Fanning himself; only a great box from his florist; such a box as had come every day to the toy apartment since its mistress had pledged herself to the copper magnate.

And the Maréchal Niel roses drew little credit for their velvety sweetness. She brushed her lovely face against them, breathed deep their hot-house perfume, and deposited them on a table top.

"Hothouse flowers in May!" Jacques laughed. She was thinking of her garden in Raleigh—or the garden that had been hers. And of the peach trees, long past their full and perfect bloom. The hill slope behind the house must be white with summer snow.

The Honorable Lawrence might have read her thoughts. Or shared them.

"Devon is the garden of the world," he remembered boyishly. "My mother's place has the most ripping old orchards. Apple trees, mostly, and all in bloom by now. They're loveliest at twilight—our English dusk is not like yours; it's a lingering, misty affair, and the orchard then is like—well, a cathedral, decked for a royal wedding. Only the trees are ghostly brides themselves."

"Not a wedding," Jacqueline corrected, the scornful little laugh still hovering around her red mouth. "Weddings call for bride's roses and lilies of the valley this season. And the bride's bouquet must be of white orchids!"

Taite touched the hothouse roses.

"Then, before all the apple blossoms tall, let's go gypsying for them," he suggested. "There's such a thing as open country, even near Gotham, I expect."

"Gypsying!" Jacqueline curtained

her dancing eyes, shook her head. "You have the most beautiful ideas, Larry Taite. But a bride's a bride." She made a disrespectful *moue* at the crowded engagement pad on the desk. "If you knew the appointments I've already cut this week! I must spend most of to-day trying on gowns, choosing hats."

"To-morrow, then," Taite demanded, accepting his dismissal.

A beautiful boy in her riding clothes, Jacque played irresolutely with her silver-mounted crop. For the first time warning dinned at her inner ear.

"I don't know. Shall I see you to-night at Mrs. Harte's?"

"They don't last long, you know," he reminded. "The apple blossoms, I mean. They'll perish long before you have another chance at them! Yes, I'm asked too."

All day she kept the disturbing vision of an English orchard in misty flower. Julie, who went with her from dress-maker to milliner, and back again, found her singularly unresponsive to the armfuls of sheer or brocaded stuff that was to enhance her vivid beauty. It was Julie who finally decided on half the costly conceits that Mrs. Edmund Fanning must have. And she was actually sorry for Fanning when he met them at the office of the architect who was planning the remodelment of his ornate town house.

After all, the man had certain rights. Jacque was riding over them—and him—roughshod these days before the wedding. Every one knew how she was carrying on with the Englishman. As Julie herself had told her, that sort of thing was *verboten*. If she'd been already married to Fanning it would have been different, of course. But to be made a fool of by one's fiancé!

Taite's very standing increased the general awkwardness. One can't very well snub the younger brother of an earl-dom; and still less—in New York—could one ignore the son of beautiful

Mary Glendenning, whose clan was numerous and mighty. He had to be asked to most of the last-minute functions that were given in Jacqueline's honor.

Mrs. Harte regretted the small dinner that was coming off that night. While Jacqueline condescended to make suggestions about the blue prints that were being shown her, the hostess tried to devise some cunning scheme for keeping the Honorable Lawrence out of her reach.

She might have spared herself the trouble; for when Jacque appeared—late—in a black-and-silver gown that was so new and so splendid as to suggest its being part of her trousseau, which it was, Fanning disengaged himself from flirtatious Fanny Haxton and took possession of her rather ungalantly.

Perhaps some *bon mot* had pierced his thick skin. Perhaps old Mrs. Vener had driven her barbed shafts home; she didn't like Jacqueline. Or it was quite likely that he was simply no longer content to watch the girl's graceless dalliance with the good-looking young Britisher, and—count the remaining days until the contract went into effect. At any rate, after a glass or so of Burgundy, and an extra liqueur, Fanning never could drink—he managed to make himself more than a little unpleasant.

"I'm not such a fool as I look, you know," he murmured under cover of the cigarette he lit for her when the handful of diners had sauntered into the music room.

The red crept up and mottled his cheeks under the amused, thoughtful gaze she turned upon him, the interested lift of her swallow's wing eyebrows, after which she turned her whole attention to a book of Japanese prints that was within reach.

"You've been seen everywhere with that English fellow ever since he landed, I say," he repeated more loudly. "By

gad, Jacque, I'm one of the parties concerned, you know. Everybody's talking. Or snickering. You're having tea with him in quiet little dumps that are too quiet to be decent, or motoring out in the country, or riding in the Park at some ungodly hour—until I can't hold my head up. It's the season's joke, and in damn poor taste!"

"Is that all?" inquired Jacqueline, still smiling, and fingering the flame-colored fan that lay in her silken lap. Her eyelids hid the glitter of her golden eyes.

"No!" Her tone roused him to bull rage, but the social veneer of two generations kept his tone within the key of *savoir-faire*. Only his big hands, which opened and shut convulsively, betrayed him.

"You're to send him packing for the next five days and devote some of your time to me. After that"—Fanning laughed—"I'll take a more personal interest in you—friends."

They were sheltered, luckily, by the window embrasure that framed Jacqueline in her black-and-silver perfection. And no one could have guessed that aught but honeyed words were being exchanged from her serene composure, her smiling lips and lowered eyes. But Nelson Carey, who was watching her from across the piano top where he lounged while Fanny Haxton played snatches of Parisian song, saw her draw herself up and away from the man at her side, and beckon to Lawrence Taite.

As he came up she rose, opening and shutting the feathers of her fan, flashed a brilliant smile upon him.

"Those apple blossoms," she said clearly, ignoring sleek, furious Fanning. "They'll be all gone after one windy day, I'm afraid. We'd better go gyp-sying to-morrow, after all!"

And with a nod that included them both, dismissed them both, she trailed over to Mrs. Harte to make her adieux. The Honorable Larry laughed quietly

and, with the courtliest little bow, restored the book of prints to its place beside Fanning, whose hand had swept it to the floor. Then he, too, sauntered away.

Beyond the Long Island suburbs, and the elaborate summer places that embroider the green strip, one can motor for hours along old-fashioned, sandy roads, past forlorn farmhouses, often abandoned, and long stretches of open country. A few rich people have taken advantage of this desolate beauty, but only a few. And its inaccessibility delivers it from the commuting Philistines.

Jacqueline picked out the path joyously the next afternoon, and the bright-red runabout that Larry Taite had hired for the day nosed its leisurely way along little-frequented roads.

A spirit of supreme gayety infected them both; the gayety which buoys up imperiled, adventurous souls. The May sun shone from a sky more blue than anything but itself; hedge and field were abloom; the wind, flower sweet and fresh from the Sound, was summer's own heady breath.

They had begged lunch at a farmhouse, and afterward, looted the apple orchard behind the barn. The back seat of the tinny little machine was laden with pink-and-white bloom, which the Honorable Lawrence, with commendable honesty, had paid for in advance by tucking a biggish bill under his blue willow plate before they left the hospitable kitchen. But Jacqueline, enthralled with the filched pleasure of the afternoon, laughed at the minute watch on her wrist; dared him to take the overgrown trail that branched mysteriously off from the straight road, into a sun-dappled wood.

The little car could make it, by grace of ancient wagon ruts that scarred the sward. And Taite, tossing to the winds the haunting caution that kept cropping up since the brief scene with Fanning

in Julie Harte's music room the night before, shrugged acquiescence.

"It's after four; if you're dining anywhere we'd better be starting back, you know. But if you aren't——" He ended on a joyous, upward inflection.

"I'm always late everywhere," Jacque assured him truthfully. "It's so much easier. Look, Larry, violets! Drive on, like a dear. I'm sure we're in fairyland." She caught her breath at the beauty of the white-bodied birches that hid like shy nymphs in the dusk of the wood. "And only half an hour's run from Mrs. Teddy Frayne's red-roofed monstrosity. We passed it, remember?"

She laughed.

"Friday is the night of her *bal masqué*. It's to be very splendid, like everything she does. But her gardens won't be lovelier than this!"

He jammed down the brakes.

"Too rough going, I'm afraid. Shall we follow the trail on foot?"

A sudden turn in the overgrown path lured Jacqueline on ahead of him; hatless, wind-blown, she danced down the enchanted wood road. And stopped short with a cry of delight.

He caught up with her, and like happy children they marveled at their discovery. The path ended at their feet; and on a high clearing, which mossy stone steps led up to, stood a peaked-roofed cottage that might have come out of a fairy tale. The windows—those that were still intact—were dazzlingly bright from the westering glow. The front door stood open, as if waiting to welcome them. And the grass and weeds were knee-deep at the doorstep. The place could not have been tenanted for a dozen years, yet it lacked that desolate look of abandoned houses. It was secret and beautiful, rather; expectant!

Hand in hand Jacqueline and young Taite raced up the uneven steps, brushed through the clinging grass of the ter-

6—Aids.

race. In a queer, shared excitement they paused on the threshold, entered.

"It looks alive!" she breathed, tiptoeing across the objecting floor.

"Waiting for us," suggested Larry. He opened the blinds, flooded the dusty room with sunset light. "Let's roam about a bit."

They wandered silently through the empty rooms, explored attic and cellar, still with that odd sense of unreality. And they stood wordless in the small room that led from the kitchen—a dining-room of other days. For double windows looked out upon an orchard, unpruned, uncared for, but blossom laden, bridal white, swaying in the wind.

"It's enchanted, of course. Orchard and wood and all!" Jacqueline brushed back a strand of her witch-dark hair. "I wonder if we can ever find our way back to—disenchantment." Her voice quivered a little.

"Never!" said the Honorable Lawrence. "It's lost for good, I think." He caught her slim, restless hand. "Do you want to find it?"

For the second time he thrilled to the tumultuous pulse beat in her wrist.

"Not yet." Inexplicable tears sprang to her eyes; she closed them—and found herself swept rapturously into a pair of strong young arms, kissed and kissed again.

"Jacqueline—Jacqueline!" whispered Taite, holding her close to his heart.

"Dear!" She gave him her lips again, strangely muted by his kiss.

"You love me!"

She laughed dreamily.

"Didn't you know?"

The sun had gone down, and the night wind sprung up, chilling them both, before time began again. As if the spell of the expectant house were broken by the day's departure, Jacqueline stirred, awoke from the dream.

"It's late!" she cried. "Larry, we're

bewitched in an enchanted wood! Take me home."

He laughed unsteadily.

"I must, I suppose. Darling, you know I'm poor, don't you? I haven't a *sou marqué*, as a matter of fact. Some day, I suppose, I'll come into some of the Glendenning money, but now——" He laughed. "I took pains not to involve myself in your dear toils last year, when I thought you were an heiress——"

Jacque put her hand dazedly to her head. Why was she speaking like that, as if he had forgotten——

"What does it matter? The make-believe's ended, Larry. You must take me home, and forget to-day ever happened!"

Silence spun out between them.

"I don't understand," Taite muttered. "Forget?"

"All this." Her tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of her mouth. Forget! "It's only make-believe. The reality is—Edmund, and Saturday!"

"Edmund," he echoed at last, "Edmund. I'd forgotten him, and his—money. So you're going back to him, stamped with my kisses, kisses you've returned and meant!"

"I must!" Her lips barely moved.

"Must!" He laughed discordantly; his feet stumbled on the doorsill of the enchanted cottage, bleak and mysterious now against the graying sky. And like ghosts, they descended the mossy steps, traversed the tangled path that led to—disenchantment.

CHAPTER III.

Thus does the jade adventure flout her followers!

Jacqueline, more listless than Julie Harte had ever known her to be, turned inexplicably docile just before her small, important wedding. She devoted herself to the final preparations for the event, wrote endless notes of thanks for

the gifts that kept pouring into the toy apartment, settled her affairs in as much order as her slim bank balance would permit.

When Fanning came the morning after her venture in the enchanted wood, embarrassed, contrite, frightened—he had rung up hourly the day before—she was not even elated at her victory.

"I—apologize," he stammered, rather a pathetic figure to her eyes, in his faultless morning coat and striped trousers; with a gayish waistcoat and a double gardenia to lend the jauntiness of youth to his middle-aged girth. His oily, thinning hair was carefully brushed in order that as much as possible of the bald spot should be concealed. The small vanity struck her anew as he stroked his head with a plump, perturbed hand. "I was exceedingly rude the other night. I was properly punished!"

"*Mea culpa*," murmured Jacqueline, fingering his orchids. "I'm sorry, Edmund. I've been behaving badly. You were quite within your rights."

"Then my punishment is completed?"

She evaded his arms, showed him some porcelain that had come that morning from old Mrs. Venner.

"Quite."

He didn't understand the supreme irony of her tone, of course. But he drew a breath of gusty relief.

"When you're fifty, Jacque, and madly in love—and youth is waiting around the corner to cheat you!"

Jacqueline laughed; laughter that was like the music of water glasses played on by a cunning hand, rather than a girl's mirth.

"My word, once given, is safe security, Edmund!"

She winced when that reminded him of Paul who was due that day or the next. Poor Paul! How his bitter, sensitive spirit would recoil from the flower-decked sale. She didn't want him to come and suffer, much as she wanted his dear comradeship. She remembered

his shame and anguish when he learned by what means she had replaced the money he had taken. His heartbreak had been very real to them both for he loved her, this weakling brother of hers!

She sent Fanning away in a state of fatuous bliss, allowed the little French seamstress who came with the Dresden-shepherdess gown she was to wear to the Fraynes' costume fête to drape its pastel-tinted folds about her, adjust the dipping hat upon her to-be-powdered hair. Jacqueline de Courvain swept her a splendid curtsy from the shadowy depths of the old pier glass that dominated her small court bedroom. Beauty of a long-dead day, in powder and patches!

Ancient legend, like a strain of half-forgotten music, came dimly to that Jacqueline's great-granddaughter. Her ancestress had given up wealth and splendor, a noble name, her innocent, carefree youth in her parents' home, for an impetuous lover in a strange land, fraught with peril and poverty. Her very life she had given for that great love of hers, for in a year the fever from the Louisiana marshland where young Herron had brought her wasted her away, and not even the baby hands of the child at her breast could hold her back from that other gallant journey.

"Lucky you!" whispered Jacqueline to the mirrored ghost.

"Did ma'm'selle speak?" inquired the sewing woman between a mouthful of pins.

"This pannier—that's better."

All the next day, and the next, Jacqueline spent with her cousin-in-law. The Harte house was being decked for the wedding. Sheaves upon sheaves of costly bloom and greenery were brought into the great drawing-rooms; an arbor was built, rose latticed, in the curve of the bay windows. Here Jacqueline, in pearls and point, was to take her vows before a generous handful of the elect.

Magically, an Eden was made; and

in it, the afternoon before the Frayne ball, the rehearsal took place. The ceremony was to be of elaborate simplicity, with Julie Harte as Jacqueline's single attendant.

The rehearsal was a strain, and Fanning commented solicitously upon her nervous pallor. Jacques wondered if she'd always be tense at his touch, evading him by small subterfuges. Horror!

Mrs. Harte got rid of the importunate lover at last, made the girl go to her room to rest. She flung up her hands at finding her in the deft hands of a maid two hours later; no longer Jacqueline, but an old French miniature, come to life in rustling brocade, powder, and patches.

"You aren't going to dance all night?" implored the matron.

Jacqueline applied a tiny black disk to the left of one charming eyebrow, considered the powdered mound of her hair.

"Isn't my coiffure a marvel? No, dearest, we'll leave early if you like. But a *bal masqué*! Carnival, Julie. I can't miss it!"

She nodded dismissal to the maid, withdrew a crumpled yellow slip from the bodice that slipped perilously from perfect shoulders. Her gayety crumbled.

"From Paul. He isn't coming. I wanted him, to-night of all times. I—I love him, Julie. He's all I've got."

Julie read the oddly curt message in silence. It meant, she knew, that Paul Herron was on one of his wild drunks. Now! When his sister was on the eve of the supreme sacrifice, made for him.

A strangled sob startled her. Jacqueline, forgetful of her Old-World splendor, had buried her face in her lovely bare arms, was weeping painfully, desperately, as people who never indulge grief weep. Julie gathered the bundle of crumpled brocade and tears in a warm embrace.

"Jacqueline! You've been a tragic

little ghost for days. Something's happened!" cried her friend. "It isn't just Paul's not coming—or even this marriage of yours. Jacques, you mad thing! Is it—Lawrence Taite?"

At his name Jacqueline flung back her head.

"It was, perhaps." She dashed away the tears gleaming on her lashes, pressed the damp ball of her handkerchief to her quivering red mouth. "But it's over, Julie. A finished adventure, like all the rest. These tears are for Paul. If only he hadn't failed me!"

She smiled at the marquise in the mirror, lifted her powdered chin.

"They danced at Versailles while the Bastille burned and Paris ran with blood. I'll dance to-night! Am I a lovely marquise, Julie?"

Much later, Fanning sent his closed car for them. He was being given a benedict's dinner, and could not attend the fête himself. He was not sorry. Masquerades always bored him.

The Fraynes' ornate place had been transformed into the abode of beauty itself. The grounds, beautiful at any time, were illuminated by cunningly placed lights, delicate hued, that lent glamour to bush and blossom, mystery to the masked couples who sauntered down the paths, or dallied in the shadow of the hedge.

Romance stalked abroad. Each cavalier, laughing under the concealing strip of black satin, was a lover. Every woman who flirted her fan or lowered her eyelids at a gallant audacity was alluring, hidden. Mirth and music, lights and laughter. Carnival!

Jacqueline was besieged by a portly Pierrot as she descended the polished steps that led to the ballroom. She suspected him of being none other than her host, but the doubt lent him a certain charm. And her volatile temperament doffed care in the maze of the first waltz. Or as soon as a wordless unknown had swept her unceremoniously

off under the Pierrot's nose, during the first encore. He matched her own fleet grace, she found. People turned to watch them as they danced down the room. Youth and joy incarnate!

When the music ceased they drifted toward the long French windows. Lanterns and laughter beckoned from the terrace. Acacia flowered in the moonlight, sent out faint fragrance.

"Who are you, good friar?" Jacqueline strove to recognize the hooded countenance of the man at her side. His eyes gleamed through the slits of the mask.

"A poor monk, Madame la Marquise—doing penance."

His very voice was muffled and indistinct through the cowl.

"By accompanying me here?" asked the beauty, a hint of mirth in her tone.

"By silence."

Here was adventure! Jacqueline greeted it, reached up to break off a flower, flicked it against cowed lips. But the impertinence did not bear fruit; a handful of revelers surrounded her noisily—one of them was a Spanish cavalier she had brushed by on the stairs—and when she looked about for him, the monk was gone. She danced tirelessly; coquetted; intrigued; dared. Jacqueline Herron, bride of the morrow, was not! In her silver shoes danced a feckless spirit of the *masque*. What was a kiss or a flower in that revelry?

Mrs. Harte had found a party of friends in an upper room of the mansion, where bridge was going on. After an hour's dancing they played until supper. It takes youth to make carnival!

And she merely sighed at not finding Jacqueline in the shifting maze of the supper room—and swept her Elizabethan skirts aside to make room for an agreeable young Turk she couldn't quite place.

And, in the meantime, Jacqueline the adventurous was waiting for the coy

jade, and the brown-cowled monk whom she had sent in for her featherweight wrap. It was only May, after all, in spite of the moon and the magic.

She stood under the acacia bush, plucking at the silvery petals. So rapt in thought was she that the merry-makers passed her by undisturbed. The monk approached; wordless, smiling, perhaps, under the all-concealing hood, at her intense curiosity. Jacqueline curtsied, presented her gleaming shoulders for the length of chiffon and fur that hung over his arm. And as he placed it upon her, his loose monk's sleeve fell back, revealing a strong, brown wrist that bore an odd scar. Her lashes hid her shining eyes.

"You are gallant, Sir Friar. Are you gallant enough to succor a lady in distress?"

Her hand stole back to the destruction of another blossom. Her tone kept its elaborate note of make-believe.

"Like Cinderella, I must leave before the clock strikes—my godmother would rather stay. Could you produce a coach and four?"

"I might filch one," he murmured into the enveloping folds of the hood. His eyes lingered upon her masked beauty.

"Then meet me at the postern gate!" she commanded, and fled to the glitter of the ball.

Twenty minutes later, having left word for Julie with a servant, she met the monk at the great iron gate, and gathering her gown's stiff fullness into both hands, stepped into the low, gray car that throbbed its readiness. In silence, still cowled, the man took the wheel, and the road spun out behind them. Monk and marquise—and a Mercer that had nothing to do with either of them! Jacqueline broke into soft laughter.

She spoke to the man, was vouchsafed no response, and laid her hand on his arm.

"What nonsense!" Mirth—or possibly doubt—trembled in her tones. "You can't keep up the farce all night. I saw your wrist."

The car increased its speed. The roads weren't good, and Jacqueline was jolted into silence.

"Beast!" she said at last between her teeth. "You've *got* to listen to me! I won't let you go like this, do you hear? Larry—you're breaking my heart. After I've maneuvered for this like a vulgar little parlor maid, are you going to make it futile?"

The roads were getting worse and worse. Jacqueline, who had been watching the hooded face beside her instead of the black-and-silver country, gave a cry of alarm. They had just passed an overgrown trail that twisted into a birch wood—all strangely patterned by moonlight, mysterious and unknown, yet familiar.

"It's the wrong road, Larry. This isn't the way back!"

The machine, which had been thumping curiously, slowed down, came to a troubled stop. Taite leaned back, pulled away the disfiguring hood and cowl. He looked singularly fair and boyish against the night.

"A neat job, by Jove," he exclaimed pleasantly. "Get out, please."

Thinking he was going to do something to the machine, Jacqueline jumped lightly to the ground. To her amazement, he shoved the car under a tall clump of bushes by the side of the road, wiped his brow with an air of finality. Terror took possession of the bepowdered beauty. She shivered under her chiffon wrap.

"Larry! What have you done? Why are we here? I must get back!"

He took her arm, piloted her up a flight of stone steps by the gleam of a flash light he had taken from the car.

"Drained the car just before we started. Gauged the gas neatly, didn't I?"

The moon suddenly came out from behind a cloud, lit the night world. She found herself almost on the doorstep of the abandoned cottage which they had discovered the other day. The elm tree sighed gently in the night wind, patterned the tiny porch with a filigree of leaf designs where the moonlight sifted through its branches. The door still stood ajar.

"Larry!" Her voice sounded like a frightened child's. "Is this a joke, or what? Why, it's *miles* back to the Fraynes'. It's miles to anywhere! It will be dawn before we can get away. And—have you forgotten?—to-morrow's my wedding day. This is—ruin!"

"It's adventure," he corrected, steely eyed. "This is the sort of thing you like, I believe. Chance intrigues; reckless, heartless interludes that mean—a new adventure to you, and something quite different to the poor devil you involve; peril, the sort of peril you can cross your fingers at, being a young and innocent girl. Innocent!" He laughed. "And then, when you're fed up with this sort of thing, and are in a bad hole finan-

cially, and want to be safe, you sell out! Jacqueline, you've taken the heart out of me. Cheated it out of me! You've got to pay for it!"

"Larry!" She cried out in an anguish that he couldn't guess.

"Oh, no!" He laughed at her terror. "Don't be afraid. You're quite safe here. I'll leave you in a few minutes. There's some sort of a shed behind the house where I'll spend the night very comfortably. Nothing will touch you. But, my dear, this last adventure mustn't be cut short. At noon to-morrow you can leave—in the morning, for that matter."

"My wedding!" she moaned. "Larry, you've gone mad! It must go through—I've taken his money." He hushed her abruptly.

"It must be—postponed, I'm afraid. You can't have everything, Jacque! And now—good night."

He strode off toward the tiny barn. And Jacqueline, dazed, sobbing under her breath, crept into the front room of the cottage, dropped in a pathetic heap on the dusty floor to wait for morning.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE JUNE NUMBER.



INTIMACY

ON this huge evening, redolent and cool,
Strange things we say, without a single word.
The sedges wading in the stony pool
Hear now the secrets they have never heard.

For on this gate no hopes but ours have leaned,
And in these paths no joys but ours have trod.
Take thou the harvest that my hands have gleaned,
And yield, dear soul, thy syllable of God.

ROBERT HILLYER.

"The Laughing Picture"

By Frances O. J. Gaither

Author of "The Fourth Fate,"
"The Coward," etc.



IT was called "The Laughing Picture"—the picture of John Winter's young wife. Lowes painted it. In the course of its painting, that picture, gay and beautiful as it was, seemed to urge John Winter to strange, grim action. I say *seemed* because, of course, the true springs of Winter's madness must have lain in Winter himself and in his wife, Maida—in Monsieur André, too, of course. It would be too fantastic to suppose a mere painting could do more than focus the currents that swirled about it. Still, this picture did strangely influence Winter. And Lowes, who painted it, incurs some blame if only because he possessed just the measure of skill that he did possess, if only because he achieved that combination of paint and canvas and something more which made up "The Laughing Picture."

A critic of pictures John Winter was not. Emphatically not. In fact, the first time Lowes ever saw him, Winter told about having once had his check for fifteen thousand and odd coaxed from him in exchange for a Tintoretto that was a most awful fake. And even as he told the story with a teased chuckle, it was perfectly apparent that his chagrin at being duped was not as a connoisseur, but as a business man; his regret not for the fake painting, but for the fifteen thousand and odd. Frankly, he had no standard for measuring art, as he said over and over. But he adored his wife in the beginning and freely confessed it, rating her laugh at a cool million. He was a big, rather inarticulate fellow, slow of un-

derstanding, unwarrantably sentimental, just the man to go to pieces under disillusion.

Lowes saw Winter and his wife that first time in Monsieur André's studio of dancing. Lowes came there by André's invitation, given not long before at the time of Lowes' plating the colors of curtain and costumes for one of the dancing-master's expensive exhibitions.

"You will bring your portfolio? Take notes in my studio? Ah, monsieur, you will paint something in the manner of Degas." Lowes, grumbling that he would paint in the manner of none but Lowes, had come.

The first class was a class of children. Lowes could not have said why, but he found their teetering about on their toes painful. He took no notes, therefore, but sat wishing he had not come, had not wasted an afternoon of rare, working light.

A man sat down beside Lowes. His splendid overcoat, which he did not remove, murmured with his breathing that it fitted perfectly over a perfectly fitting suit, even hinted of a recent, perfectly fitting lunch inside of all. The hand which held hat and gloves was wide with short, blunt fingers. It was a hand that connoted steering wheels, golf sticks, buzzers on mahogany desks, the hand, in short, of prosperous middle age.

Then Lowes saw her. She was standing under one of those high windows looking toward the dais where the children were dancing. She wore the short, fluffed skirts of the traditional ballet. They sprayed out about her

against the polished, blue wall. The light flowed down on her, just as he afterward painted it, and showed her with lifted chin, dark, somewhat eager eyes. She was watching Monsieur André fuss up and down among his small Pierrettes. Lowes' heart beat again with the violence of youth. Don't misunderstand. He was a celibate. It was solely as a painter that he was stirred. She wore for him, because he wanted to paint her, a sort of golden aura, as though she came to him straight from the glamorous kingdom of his one desire. Something about her eyes, her hair, her grace of poise, challenged his skill. In the instant that he saw her he felt, no, knew, that if he might paint her truly, the result would be art.

Of course Lowes did not conceive the picture itself in this moment. He simply saw her as one to be painted. His heart pounded with urgency and longing. He saw her looking at André with slightly parted lips, eyes shadowy, wholly rapt. And he wished to paint her. He saw her poised like some winged thing on the edge of flying. Was that why he wished to paint her? Did some prophetic vision of broken wings urge speed upon him? Not consciously. Lowes saw only a beautiful young woman in the dress of a *ballerina*, a patrician young woman whose skin and hair and sprayed-out skirts challenged his skill for portraying color and texture, challenged it as nothing else had ever done. That was all. It was enough for Lowes.

The young woman looked that way, smiled, nodded as in greeting. It was for the opulent man, of course. Lowes turned to look at him. He had a square chin with a cleft in it that accorded with the materially competent hand. Lowes spoke to him.

"You know her?"

"Know her?"

The man frowned, but Lowes, obsessed, brushed aside rebuke.

"I want to paint her. That's why I asked."

The frown relaxed into a smile. Displeasure gave place to something else, pride perhaps. It was all one to Lowes.

"Oh," said the man. Then he chuckled. "Know her! I'm her husband."

The dancing children were gone, and a bevy of *ballerinas* converged upon Monsieur André like swans in a lagoon about a crust. Monsieur André was a darting, electric little man with sparkling eyes and a waxed mustache. His black satin knickerbockers and clinging blouse of soft, white linen flashed from among the crowding swans, now in one place, now in another. The young woman left her place under the high window. The man beside Lowes stood up and beckoned her.

"My name is Winter," he said as she came. "John Winter."

"Mine is Lowes."

Winter presented him.

"Mr. Lowes wants to paint you, Maida, make a picture of you." His tone was tentative, cautious.

But she laughed, a young laugh, as full of glee as a child's on Christmas morning, and caught her palms together.

"Really and truly?" she asked Lowes.

She was enchanted. Lowes rubbed his hands and pulled at his gray mustache. They were all standing now. John Winter smiled down at his young wife in her elfin attire.

He must have been twice her age, a fact which would have led any one but Lowes to speculate about that expression Winter summoned on his young wife's face. You, for example, could you have refrained from peering deep into her eyes? Lowes could and did refrain. He only rubbed his white hands and thought single-mindedly of painting those eyes, that skin and hair. At this time Lowes knew of life only so much

exactly as he had been able to learn in daily, swift sallies from his studio to the Jefferson Market to buy a chop or two, and in rarer voyages up from Washington Square atop a green bus. Of the haunting mystery of women, the hunger of love, and the tortures of jealousy, Lowes knew—well, as little as John Winter knew of art.

"So you'll like that," John Winter was saying to his wife. Then he smiled at Lowes. "She's a regular kid." He spoke indulgently, fatuously, *you* might have thought, but never the unanalytical Lowes. "I am no judge of pictures," said Winter, and then, as his wife went away to dress, he treated Lowes to the narrative of the fake Tintoretto and the fifteen thousand and odd. "Of course I wouldn't be such a fool twice," he finished.

"One learns," murmured Lowes, tugging at his mustache and frowning.

"Though, of course," added Winter hastily, answering the frown, perhaps, "I'd never let expense stand in the way of anything that pleases Maida."

"My whole interest," observed Lowes rather stiffly for a mere artist in the presence of wealth, "is in making the picture art."

"Certainly. Certainly. But it does no harm for you to know I'm glad you thought of painting her."

He smiled again, and then Lowes, perforce, smiled, too.

Under such auspicious stars of mutual pleasure was Lowes' painting of Winter's wife projected. The days of its inception were auspicious, too.

Maida Winter's enthusiasm for being painted made her the most docile of sitters. Her comings were satisfactorily frequent. Hardly did the oleanderlike breath of the perfume she used fade from the air before she was back again to renew in Lowes' monastic studio the hint of flowers. Winter almost always came to take his wife home at the end of the afternoon, and he, too,

brought a breath of something fresh into the long room with its gray walls and rows of painted canvases. There was about John Winter, big and simple as he was, something tonic like a current of strong, clean wind.

True, Winter looked at his wife far oftener than at Lowes' work, but then he knew nothing, admittedly, of what it takes to make a painting. Often, too, he required to be assured that Lowes would do her justice—an expression, by the way, which so suggested claptrap photography that Lowes could hardly answer it civilly.

"Just do her justice, will you, Lowes?" Winter would say.

But beyond that he had no interest. She was happy at being painted, and that plainly contented John Winter. They both offered Lowes confidences. Winter, in his hearty fashion, told endless stories about his wife's cleverness. As little short of miraculous he pointed to the fact that she so sacrificially preferred her study of dancing to the giving of teas.

"She who could indulge herself," he was always saying.

And Winter's wife, with little gusts of enthusiasm about this or that, sometimes sought to relieve the tedium of a sitting. Sometimes her subject was that same dancing which, she assured Lowes, she worked at as seriously, she was certain, as Lowes at his painting. Sometimes it was hers and Winter's child—it seemed there was a child—spoken of by her with a quick intake of breath.

The confidences Lowes did not encourage. These people were nothing to Lowes. She was merely the woman his eye saw and his hand copied. Winter was a sort of necessary adjunct to her, no more. So Lowes made one-syllable replies or none at all to them, tugged at his gray mustache and went on painting.

Once she protested.

"I should think it would help you paint me," she said, "if we talked about me, what I like and everything."

"I do not mix my color by formula," answered Lowes dryly.

It was very far from Lowes' purpose to pry into that with which he had no concern. And if Winter and his wife were nothing to him, Monsieur André, for all of Lowes' having known him first, was yet less. But even Lowes was not blind. And André was just the type the celibate Lowes could be counted on to dislike.

Lowes was painting Winter's young wife as a *ballerina*. From a number of studies he at last settled on one which showed her, exhilarated from dancing, dropped like a great bit of wind-blown thistledown upon a divan. A great deal, of course, depended upon the spontaneity of the pose. To help him there, Winter ordered a music machine sent around and she brought André to dance with her. André used to put on the machine a record of Chopin's *Valse Brillante*. Then they—André and the wife of John Winter—danced.

It was a dance of dalliance, liquid yielding, soft retreating, a dance for moonlight and the feet of youth on dewy grass.

The dancing master, with easy histrionics, now ardent, now gentle, his nimble legs twinkling in rhythmic perfection, achieved completely the effect of youth; but John Winter's wife, who, on the contrary, was actually so very young, left something wanting. There was a hint of strain where there should have been artlessness in her smile, a certain uneasiness in her tripping coquetry.

Lowes tried not to think about André or André's dance of dalliance with Winter's young wife. But always, when the dance was over and she dropped, laughing, to her divan, André's mocking voice flicked Lowes' ears. Even as he painted steadily on, seeking

to make quite perfect the hair and skin and pose of Winter's beautiful wife, Lowes found that strange forebodings flared rocketwise across his celibate mind.

Sometimes the dancing master went away before John Winter came to take his wife home, but quite as often he lingered about, consuming cigarettes and talking. The patrician *ballerina* upon her divan listened to him, laughing at his jokes and gay, foreign gestures, and knitting her brows when he offered morsels of his blithely cynical philosophy. Art—dancing that was to André—was a favorite theme. When André talked, art seemed some sort of pagan god to be propitiated by sacrifices of this or that.

One day the domestic virtues were demanded to be offered up. Between Lowes and his easel, in spite of him, slipped a vision of John Winter's cleft chin and smiling eyes.

"In America this is not understood," said Monsieur André, twirling a voluble hand. "But it is as I say. I am frank with you." He appealed to Lowes. "Can one paint greatly without the color of knowledge?"

His full, red lips under the gleaming, black mustache mocked at Lowes' grayness. Lowes mumbled something unintelligible. Maida Winter leaned forward.

"Go on," she said to André.

He strutted up and down before her like some exotic bird swelling its bright plumage.

"Shall one dance greatly," he cried, "who is afraid to drink life, drink love?"

Then suddenly they were all three, André and Winter's wife and Lowes before his canvas, drawn with one accord to look back of them down the long room. John Winter had come inside and silently closed the door behind him. There was a moment of stillness. Maida broke it, laughing.

"Come, see the picture, John. It's grown a lot since Thursday."

Lowes looked at John Winter standing there, and then he looked back at the picture of Winter's wife, fully drafted, already taking color and form on the big easel at his hand. "The Beautiful Ballerina," Lowes called the picture in his heart at this time. All that he knew of light and shadow and texture he would expend upon reproducing her skin and hair, the airy sheen of her skirts foaming about her like whipped-up froth. He could make his own every mellow color in the deep-toned Oriental rug covering his divan. Against it she should live, lying back on one elbow, chin up, laughing.

Already he had caught her pose, feet up from the floor, ankles crossed, toes daintily pointed out, as though the tide of the dance had not wholly ebbed, as though the warmth and rhythm of the music still rippled along her limbs and would as yet let her only half relax.

"Grown, has it?" said John Winter.

He came down the room and around the easel. A chromo would please him equally, thought Lowes with some asperity. Equally? No, better.

"Yes, it has grown," the painter said aloud. "How do you like it?"

But Winter was not even looking at the image of his wife. He had eyes only for her vibrant person. She sprang up and ran to him, slipping her hand through his arm.

"I'm glad you've come," she said to him; "I was getting tired."

He covered her fingers with his blunt, gloved hand in an enveloping gesture common to him. His bulk, stolid, inelastic, swathed in his great, opulent overcoat, loomed overwhelmingly, opposed now in such startling proximity to her supple fragility and her spritelike dress. For a moment he stared down at her. She met his eyes, smiling. Then he smiled, too, and told her to "run get her things on."

André looked at Lowes. He laughed, his delicate, pointed laugh.

"Madame's husband is not interested in the painting. He has, perhaps, an overfastidious taste in matters of art?"

Lowes frowned.

"Not at all," said Winter. "On the contrary. I don't understand art at all, know nothing of it."

"Ah?" murmured André. He spoke of an appointment, and was gone.

"Special friend of yours, this André?" Winter said to Lowes.

"No."

"I can't say I get him," Winter mused. "A man—teaching women to dance!" Lowes was cleaning his brushes. "And dancing!" went on John Winter. "I wonder what there is so fascinating in it anyway."

Lowes snatched a sidelong look at Winter's cleft chin, at his square cheek, and at his eyes which were not smiling now. Winter plainly was puzzled. And being puzzled made Winter quite miserable. Even Lowes could see that. Men like Winter appear stupid when confronted with half tones, sublimated feelings.

"I wonder," murmured Lowes.

Just then light broke over Winter's face. It was as if he saw the answer to all questions.

"Here she comes," he cried, and added under his breath in that chuckling way that did sound fatuous, "like a doll in a muff."

His young wife tripped out to them in a fur coat so absurdly ample as to make her little head seem too small, her slender ankles too slender.

"And what do you think of it?" she asked Winter.

"Think of it?" said Winter. "Magnificent! I'm glad you decided on mole."

"Not my coat. The picture, goose. Mr. Lowes' beautiful painting!"

Winter tore his gaze from her and regarded the canvas.

"Pretty," he said vaguely.

"Pretty!" mocked his wife, laughing at him.

"Well, of course I'm no judge. Why, Mr. Lowes, I know so little about art that a dealer once——"

"You told me," Lowes interrupted.

Maida Winter went over and stood beside the canvas challenging comparison.

"You don't have to be a judge of art, John, to say whether the picture looks like me. Is it natural? Is it alive? Does it give you the feel of me?"

Again that perplexed line came into Winter's brow, again that unhappy expression. He looked from the picture to Lowes uncertainly.

"Say what you think," said Lowes shortly.

John Winter coughed. Then he turned from the airy replica of his young wife shining against the mellowed Persian rug to her living self bundled in the furs he had bought her. He drew a deep, satisfied breath, and his brow smoothed.

"Just do her justice," said John Winter, "and it will be a picture worth a dozen of those old masters. You will do her justice, won't you, Lowes?"

Before Lowes could answer, there was an odd sound from his stairway, a clump, clump, like the stiff step of a cork leg or two cork legs. Maida Winter laughed, that little flurry of blowing emotion that was like nothing so much as a puff of unexpected breeze.

"Baby!" she exclaimed and then called out: "Bring her in, Nanna."

Brought in, the baby was revealed as a fur-wrapped bundle trotting on short, fat legs beside a nurse, correct in floating lawn streamers and slate-gray cape. At their entrance Winter did not even turn around.

"You will do her justice, won't you, Lowes?" he insisted.

But the baby wouldn't be ignored.

She lifted her round chin, cleft, funnily, like John Winter's own. She pointed a plump, gloved hand at the laughing portrait.

"It's my mother," she cried in evident delight at her acumen. "Who is my mother laughing at like that?"

Winter frowned. No one spoke. "Damn it," thought Lowes, "these people are nothing to me." The baby had on unmatched socks. He stared at them. His beautiful *ballerina* shoe, seductive, at his hand. He didn't answer Winter.

Followed days in which rehearsals for one of André's exhibitions of dancing claimed all of Maida Winter's time. There was nothing in the circumstance itself to foster those forebodings that Lowes was fast becoming prey to. But, not seeing her, he was more and more haunted by misgivings about her. Then one day, when the exhibition was over, some one telephoned that Mrs. Winter could not fill her appointments for the present. The voice was unidentified and colorless, devoid of responsibility, only a maid almost certainly; and that shut Lowes off from any interrogation. He let the connection be severed without his asking—anything. Then he stood, receiver in hand, regretting that he hadn't said at least: "Will she call me when the sittings can go on?" Yes, he could have said that. That would have revealed none of his forebodings.

He tried to go on without her. He wished only to paint an airier sheen on the dancer's skirts and a softer texture into the Persian rug, to mellow the shadows in her dusky hair and brighten the lights on her curving cheek and lifted chin. But, even so, he found himself increasingly prone to troubled thought of her. He recalled, by contrast, that first impression. Then he had seen her winged, poised. Now, he was always being harried by elusive images of broken or dragged wings. His solitude heightened the clarity of

those images. The celibate Lowes had—why not admit it?—a rooted conviction of the frailty of women.

"I have only to paint her," he reminded himself.

One bleak afternoon as it was fast becoming too gray to work, he heard his door open and looked around his easel to see who was coming in. It was John Winter. He looked strange. His shoulders sagged. Lowes slipped his palette from his thumb and went toward him. Winter's square cheek, even his cleft chin, seemed shaken, tremulous. It was come. He searched Lowes' face.

"You haven't heard?" said Winter.

"No."

"Maida. Maida is gone."

Lowes saw that the hat in John Winter's hand shook. Yes, it was come. He took the hat.

"Sit down, Winter."

Winter sat down. Lowes sat down, too. Winter pressed his blunt hands down on the arms of the chair so the fingers no longer trembled. Lowes spoke first.

"When did she—go?"

"Saturday. Midnight. It happened quickly. She got overheated, dancing at the exhibition. Pneumonia."

"Died! I thought—I didn't know that—"

Stupid! Lowes could have cursed himself. Winter's brow contorted. His lips were almost gray. He tried to speak, but no words came. He just stared at Lowes. Lowes fumbled at his mustache. Dead. He mustn't think about that. It would ruin the picture. Winter's lips worked. Lowes liked Winter.

"She was so alive," Lowes dragged out.

The familiar, kindly expression came back into Winter's eyes, though it was dim, the baffled ghost of his old wistful smile.

"Yes. You knew her well, Lowes."

"No, no. Not well at all. Not at all. I know nothing of women," he finished, taking cover in his asceticism.

There was another silence in which Winter kept on looking at Lowes. He seemed to want to talk.

"The picture," he began at last, "the—the—laughing picture. That was why I came. I wanted to speak to you about her picture."

Silence, and then Lowes prompted:

"You'd like to have me go on, like for me to finish it, I suppose?"

Winter cleared his throat. He bent forward and laid his hand on Lowes' knee, gripped him hard.

"You think you can make it like her, don't you?"

"Oh, yes."

"Finish it," Winter said and got up to go. At the door he stopped. "Later on—maybe I'll even be glad you painted her laughing."

Lowes tried to answer, but his throat clogged. He could only nod. He could think only of that round-cheeked baby with the unmatched socks.

After Winter left, Lowes went and stood before his easel. Dusk was thickening. The studio was cold. Even in the gloom, the painted canvas gave off color like bright enamel.

"The Laughing Picture," said Lowes, and shivered.

He never called it anything else after that. "The Laughing Picture!" He pressed a switch and flooded the painting with light. "The Laughing Picture!" Almost life. Almost. A little more color where the rug glowed through the diaphanous skirts. A little softening of the wrist and knee. How easily it was shaping. His fingers knew. His eye knew. A little more and the picture would be art, Lowes' greatest picture, beauty and frailty incarnate.

John Winter's question beat in his ears. And that baby's—"Who is my mother laughing at like that?"

"Damn it!" cried Lowes. "They're nothing to me."

So he went on painting, bringing to bear every secret of light and shadow, color and texture he had amassed in his single-minded life.

John Winter often came after that to watch him work. And then, after some weeks, André came again. André, whom death had checked in his dance of dalliance with Winter's young wife. Winter was taciturn. Winter knew nothing of pictures. André was voluble. Lowes liked him less than ever. Lowes hoped Winter would never meet André there. He told André Winter's habitual hour for coming. André affected not to hear.

"As beautiful as Eve!" André cried, kissing his hand to the painting.

Lowes went on painting. A little more color where the rug showed through the froth of skirts, a little softening of the wrist and supple hand. Clearer and clearer foamed the petticoats till the very air shone through them, rounder shaped the slender ankles, softer lay the dusky hair. How easy it is to make art. André's voice flicked Lowes' unwilling ears.

"Monsieur reads women? He read that little Maida Winter? He paints her soul?"

Lowes shrugged impatiently and tried not to hear.

"What does madame's husband think of the painting now?" André asked him once.

"Winter knows nothing of art," cried Lowes, tugging at his gray mustache.

But he did not altogether understand Winter. Some secret smoldered in Winter's heart. Hidden in his pocket lay the proof of it, a thing of steel, triggered and relentless. Lowes stumbled, so to speak, upon the concrete revelation. When he was restoring a dropped glove to Winter's overcoat as he hung it on a peg, his sensitive fingers encountered in a pocket that hidden

thing, cylindrical, hard, cold as death. Lowes recoiled. He stole a swift glance at Winter, motionless before "The Laughing Picture." His face frightened Lowes.

"How much longer will you take to finish it?" asked Winter.

It was almost done, but:

"Weeks," said Lowes, "weeks, at least." But he added, silently: "Still, it is no affair of mine."

In spite of all, he found that he was haunted now by a specific terror. He was waked at night by it. What a strange sort of irony that he who knew nothing of life, who had lived remote from passions like any holy hermit, should find his very cloister beset by threat of such grim and rushing currents. Sometimes he left off, trying to sleep and went to sit before "The Laughing Picture."

André took to coming to the studio at Winter's hour. Winter changed his hour. André changed his.

"Are you mad?" Lowes asked André.

"Perhaps," said André. "A tribute to your art, monsieur!"

Fantastically, the laugh of Winter's young wife seemed to Lowes audible, musical like the song of the *Lorelei*.

"But why should you come here at all?" he begged.

"She fascinates me," André said with one of his airy, frippery gestures. "In life she fascinated me. Monsieur must have seen——"

"I saw nothing." Lowes cut him short. A dance of dalliance indifferently done, unmatched socks on Winter's round-cheeked child. These were nothing. "I merely painted her," he said austere.

André did seem mad.

"Ah, Monsieur Winter," André said another day, "the picture pleases you?"

"I know so little of art."

Winter's words came hard. He turned his head this way and that as though he did not wish to see André.

Lowes steadied himself by gripping a chair back.

"Perhaps you do not altogether understand it, monsieur?" André's voice was soft, caressing.

"Perhaps," agreed Winter. "Pictures are——"

"But the little wife, so young, so warm, so eager for life. Monsieur is sure that he understood her."

Winter looked away from him, at the laughing lips that Lowes had shaped, at the vibrant limbs still thrilling with the tide of the dance of dalliance. The glamour of life lay on the flesh that Lowes had painted. Then Winter looked at Lowes gripping his chair back. Lowes breathed hard. Winter tried to smile at him.

"Tired?" asked Winter.

Lowes nodded. As from far away buzzed André's talk, now musically droning, now darting near to sting.

"How great a task is the artist's, Monsieur Winter! You must strive to understand that. It is no mean task to paint life, to paint a soul."

Winter swayed a little as he stood and his blunt fingers fumbled with the edge of his overcoat pocket. The painting drew his gaze. The very air shone through the foaming skirts. She was laughing. Her laugh was almost audible.

Through an unwonted sympathy, Lowes was able to see his picture as Winter would have liked it to be. The enamellike colors of "The Laughing Picture" continually blurred and brightened before the painter's eyes like folds of tapestry that a wind stirs. The vibrant figure tried to shift its pose, to alter its expression, strove to become that image of Winter's desire, a laughing picture still, but Greuzelike, limpid with prismatic youth. Lowes' *ballerina*, by sharp antithesis, was incarnate frailty.

Winter, sighing, turned from it toward that place beside the easel where

she had stood that last afternoon to challenge comparison of Lowes' painting with her living self.

"Monsieur is perhaps a little disappointed in—her?" André urged.

"I know nothing of pictures," Winter-maintained, breathing heavily.

"It would be a pity," said André, "if monsieur should be—disappointed, monsieur who adored her." Under Winter's hand at the lip of his pocket there was a gleam of steel. He frowned at André moving lightly about, waving his arms in that frippery way he had. "It would be a pity. The flawless painting! Such hair, such skin, such limbs!"

André broke off, listening. Winter turned toward the door. A sound outside. Lowes heard it, too, that clump, clump upon the stairs. His pulses pounded with dread. That child again. What if she should drop questions on Winter's smoldering will? "Who is my mother laughing at like that?" Winter plunged his hand deeper into his pocket, waiting. The door opened. The child broke from her nurse and ran toward them where they stood, taut and bleak. It must have been the bright painting that drew her. John Winter watched her lift her arms to that image of his young wife, and the cords in his brow tightened. She began to laugh, a long, bubbling laugh like water running unchecked.

"It's my mother!"

"Hush," said John Winter. "Hush."

But she looked at the laughing lips of Lowes' *ballerina* and bubbled into more laughter. Her laugh rippled and ran sweetly. Winter flinched. Then his jaw hardened.

"Take her away," he ordered.

He waited till the thumping of the child's feet died away down the stairs. Then he spoke to André. His words fell oddly on the monastic serenity of that gray-walled room. They were sharp words. They were red, barbaric

words. Lowes sucked in a swift, ineffectual breath. André went pasty white. His volubility withered, his frippery gestures froze. Stammering words hung on his lips, pleading, denials.

"Hush," said John Winter. "I will kill you."

The sands of hesitation were run out. Purpose now sat squarely on his great shoulders. His bulk towered, ominous in its strength, fixed in its determination. Steel shone at the lip of his pocket. Lowes saw cunning crouch in André's eyes to pit itself against Winter's might.

André wet his lips.

"Kill madame's dancing master!" said André.

He spoke easily now, almost lazily, as though his very tongue relied upon feline grace to bring him past any thicket where death lurked. He affected not to see Winter's revolver, naked with purpose. Lowes cursed himself for his inability to move.

"I am done with talk," said Winter.

"The little madame's name is without stain," murmured André smoothly. "It cannot continue so if monsieur destroys madame's dancing master."

Heavier clouds blotted Winter's brow. The muscles of his throat worked. Not easily does a man swallow the will to kill.

"Damn you!" muttered Winter, choking.

He turned blank, heavy eyes once more toward the picture of his wife. The laughter on her lightly curving lips multiplied in Lowes' ears into the laughter of the revelers who mocked at Samson, blinded. Through a long, heart-breaking minute Winter's strangely sightless gaze clung to the canvas where flashed incarnate frailty. As soft as living tresses her dusky hair lay upon her forehead, as light as if air-blown her chiffons foamed about her. Her limbs

seemed warm with the dance of dalliance—

"Damn you!" muttered Winter, and again lifted his revolver.

Lowes sprang forward. Inactivity dropped from him in a breath, flung from him like a hampering cloak, for Winter took aim not at André, but at the bare, white bosom of the woman Lowes had painted. Lowes struck Winter's hand up, wrenched the revolver from him. The shot crashed, futile, through the skylight. Under a rain of tinkling glass, still flashed the throat of the beautiful *ballerina*, still foamed the airy skirts, still the curving lips laughed on.

Winter, soundless, terrible, moved toward her. He lifted his big, bare hands. So Samson set his might against the temple pillars. Lowes, with one sickening thought of blunt fingers rending that white throat, shut his eyes. He would not see Winter destroy his young wife, see Winter's reason crash in the ruins of his illusions. There was a crack of splintered wood, a rip of tearing canvas, another and another. Then silence. Lowes feared to open his eyes. Winter spoke.

"It didn't do her justice."

That sounded so banal, so commonplace, that Lowes did open his eyes then, opened them like a sleeper who feels sunlight cut across a nightmare. Winter was looking at paint stains on his square-tipped fingers. Then blinking, as if he, too, were shaking off nightmare, he met Lowes' gaze and tried to smile. He said again that it didn't do her justice. André waved a graceful hand.

"By no means," said André. Even André sounded commonplace, forthright instead of feline. Lowes looked at his empty easel and flinched before the truth as André went on. "It was not Madame Winter. Always of the husband and baby *she* thought. Always. Even in dancing. No abandon.

No passion." A turn of his wrist toward an indefinite huddle on the floor. "That?" cried André. "Ah, that was a Salome. Beautiful. A flawless painting in color and texture, but nevertheless quite false." False? Then not all Lowes' paint and canvas and slow-gathered secrets concerning them held so much of truth as Winter's gossamer illusions. Lowes forced his eyes to follow André's gestures toward the shapeless hummock of canvas that had been "The Laughing Picture." "Not mon-

sieur's wife at all," André finished, "merely—a—monk's chimera."

Now Winter was talking. He was the old John Winter, trying in halting fashion to translate wistful apology into terms of indemnities.

"If you would say how much," he begged. "I have no standards about these things, no way of measuring art."

Lowes tugged painfully at his gray mustache.

"It wasn't art," he said. "It didn't—do her justice."



E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM, the tireless writer of novels, short stories, plays, and movie scenarios, on his recent visit to America, discovered the reason why American women have such a "jolly good time." There are about two million more men than women in America. Reason enough, says Mr. Oppenheim. In England the figures are reversed, and Mr. Oppenheim admits they would be willing—more than willing—to send over to America half of the two million if the American men wanted them, but as they are so charmingly supplied at home he's afraid they don't!



THE high cost of wives has increased a hundred per cent in the Sudan, Lord Dewar declared in an address before the Leysian Mission in London.

"Before the war," he said, "a wife could be got for four spearheads. Now the price has doubled; one has to pay eight spearheads. In the cattle country it used to be four cows; now the price is seven cows." Will the profiteering never cease?



A NEW solution has been found for the demands of fashion. If you are lamenting your inability to indulge in a new sport skirt, just preempt the small Oriental in front of the fireplace—and there you are! The rug has been launched as the very newest thing in skirts. But one is moved to wonder—if rugs are to take the place of skirts—what will be used to replace the rugs.



WIVES should stay out at night as often as husbands," declared Mrs. Henry S. Barker, in an address before the Eastern Federation of Women's Clubs at its last general meeting. "Young married women have enough trouble at home, including their husbands, to entitle them to at least a few nights of freedom."



Kings of Hearts

By Anice Terhune

Author of "More Super-Women"



John Wilkes

GIVE me fifteen minutes start with any woman and I can cut out the handsomest man in Europe!"

The braggart who made this announcement was not the fine-looking, graceful, lady-killer one naturally pictures. On the contrary, he was known as "the ugliest man in England." His features were so ill-assembled as to make him positively grotesque. He had a decided squint. He had a flattened nose and heavy jaws. Moreover, he could not speak without lisping. Yet he made good his boast over and over again, as many better-looking rivals learned to their chagrin.

He was at once the homeliest and the most fascinating man of his day—the notorious John Wilkes.

Much of his time was spent in jail, and much more of it in avoiding jail. Between times, he posed as an "idol of the people." But, no matter whether he was on the crest of fortune's wave or submerged beneath it, whether he was in prison dodging bailiffs or running for Parliament, he found time to make love and even to write about it.

He was the son of a wealthy distiller, and was born in Clerkenwell, London,

on October 17, 1727. The figure seven seemed to have a sort of mystic significance throughout his life. In fact, the principal events in his history abound in sevens—and he was seventy years old when he died!

John was educated at Hertford and Aylesbury. Then he was sent to the University of Leyden. There, he fell in with some lively and talented boon companions, and managed to have a gorgeous time all through his college days.

In spite of John's gay life and the swiftness of the pace he kept, he became a brilliant classical scholar. As a final fling before settling down he took a trip through Holland, Flanders and Germany, seeing everything through the rose-colored glasses of youth. And, wherever he went, the women he met found him irresistible.

"Jack could have tempted Cornelia from the path of virtue," said Sargeant Glynn, his devoted friend. He might have added that "Jack" not only could, but did, tempt many all too willing Cornelias to step aside in those early, care-free days of roistering.

Then, on his return home, his spirits experienced a sudden drop. His family

told him they had picked out a wife for him. She was Mary Mead, only daughter of a rich London grocer—and she was ten years older than poor Jack. Moreover, she was solemn and staid and had no sympathy with, or understanding of his own wild spirits. Mary was amazingly deficient in all social graces. Her middle-class breeding and kill-joy manner totally unfitted her for society.

A less congenial match could hardly be imagined. It was made—not in heaven—but in the scheming brains of the two mothers. Mrs. Wilkes had an eye for money; and Mary Mead undoubtedly had cash, whatever else she lacked. Mrs. Mead had an uninteresting daughter to marry off; and young Wilkes was brilliant and attractive enough to turn the head of any would-be mother-in-law, in spite of his hideous face.

And then, added to all this, Mary wanted him. She wanted him very much indeed. She had fallen a victim to his odd charm, even before she actually met him.

So, when Jack came back "to his own home town," everything was over but the rice throwing and the old shoes, or whatever missiles wedding guests were wont to fling at defenseless eighteenth-century brides and grooms.

Jack did not wish to marry the girl. She seems to have been one of the few women of his acquaintance to whom he never tried to make love. He was fascinating enough to have found an equally rich wife nearer his own age. But he consented to the union to please his mother.

The ill-omened wedding took place at St. John's Church, Clerkenwell. Soon afterward the couple started housekeeping in Aylesbury.

The grocer's selfish daughter made no attempt to adorn her new position. Having acquired the fascinating Wilkes as a husband, it did not occur to her to

try to keep him. She sat back smugly and watched the world go by, carrying her talented husband with it.

Wilkes tried to make the best of things, but his stodgy wife bored him horribly. He used a good-sized slice of her fortune in fixing up and improving their Buckinghamshire estate; but after a few months of wedded misery, they made matters worse by going to live with the bride's mother in town. If anything at all was needed to complete their unhappiness, Mrs. Mead supplied it. Having schemed to make the match, she now became a powerful instrument in breaking it.

The pair worried along for a while. Finally a little daughter was born to them. But, instead of bringing the husband and wife together, Mary's lack of love for the baby—whom Wilkes idolized—thrust them further apart. There was a series of family rows, which culminated in a separation. Wilkes left his wife and mother-in-law to go their own sweet way; and, with baby Polly, he went his. He wrote:

My marriage was a sacrifice to Mammon, not to Venus. I stumbled at the very threshold of the Temple of Matrimony.

Once free of his wife, Wilkes plunged recklessly into the gay life he loved. His magnetism drew men and women alike to him. He was "hail fellow well met" with every one. To high and low, peer and commoner, relatives, friends, and acquaintances, he was "Jack." Even to the public he was "Jack Wilkes."

"Jack has great variety of talk," sums up Doctor Johnson. "Jack is a scholar, and Jack has the manners of a gentleman."

There were many riotous parties at his quarters in Westminster. To one of these gatherings came Betty Spooner, brought as guest by Jack's friend, Thomas Potter. It was a case of Beauty and the Beast. Beauty fell hopelessly in love with the ugly Beast, who amused

himself in turn by flirting outrageously with Beauty. The girl was brilliant and finely educated. Before the evening had fairly begun, they had both forgotten Potter's existence.

For a time Jack found Betty more than worth while. Their flirtation flamed into an intrigue which burned itself out by the very brightness of its fire.

After this Wilkes had scores of passing affairs.

Pretty Nancy Brown danced her way into his heart and out again, to make room for Kitty Towler, Lucy Ballard, Mrs. Gardner, and many others who adored him, and who managed to hold his fickle fancy for a brief time.

In 1757, Jack was elected to Parliament with the help of his friend Potter, and of William Pitt. Here he won notice as a violent orator. Then he found an even wider scope for expressing his views by publishing a paper called *The North Briton*. Political attacks in this paper at once got him into hot water, and he was lodged in prison.

No sooner was the door locked behind him than he became an object of adoration to all women who knew of his incarceration. The little winged god spent much time flying in and out between prison bars.

Among the worshipers at the political martyr's shrine, was Mary Otto. She has the distinction of being the first woman Wilkes ever really loved. She was slender, with a lilylike grace, and pretty as a Dresden-china shepherdess. As Jack could not go to her, she came to him. And she did not bother to bring a chaperon along.

This affair went on happily until, one day, a famous alderman of the city of London named Barnard—a good friend of Wilkes'—brought his wife to see the interesting prisoner. Thereafter, Mrs. Barnard made many calls at the prison. But she always omitted to bring her husband, or to tell him of her visits.

Mary Otto passed out of existence as far as Wilkes was concerned. Mrs. Barnard claimed all his attention. Letters constantly passed between the two. There were numberless clandestine meetings. The ill-used husband guessed nothing at the time. But later, when Wilkes had risen to be lord mayor, he reaped an unpleasant reward for his treachery to his friend.

Mrs. Barnard, it seems, had a belated attack of conscience. A vision of her dead child came to her, and caused her to fling herself on her knees in front of her scandalized husband and confess her guilty love for Wilkes. She omitted none of the details of the prison love affair. Barnard was an invalid at the time, and could not hunt up Wilkes. So he wrote asking Wilkes to come to him.

After some delay, Wilkes betook himself to the Barnard home in Berkeley Square and denied the whole story from beginning to end. Barnard then said quietly:

"I will send for my wife."

"I never argue with a lady," was Wilkes' pleasant retort as he turned and beat a retreat as fast as possible from the room and from the house.

A few days later, Barnard sent Wilkes another envelope. This inclosed a copy of the injured husband's will in which Wilkes had been left forty thousand dollars in money, and ten thousand dollars in valuable books and prints.

"These legacies were all canceled today," was the only word that came with the document.

But to go back to Wilkes' sojourn in prison. After everything had been made as pleasant for him there as possible, his friends paid his debts and the public got him freed. Just after he was out he met Marianne de Charpillon.

"She was a coquette with the face of a child, and a heart of steel," Wilkes said of her later.

Marianne was a beautiful Frenchwoman, about thirty years old. Her eyes

were a soft blue, her hair chestnut with gold lights in it. She was tall and graceful, with very tiny feet and hands. Wilkes became devoted to her and haunted her home at Chelsea. Marianne more than returned his love. She idolized him. He soon established her and her mother in a house in town, and there she reigned for four years.

Marianne was herself a heartbreaker. She had had a number of affairs before she met Wilkes, the most famous of which was that with Casanova. But in Wilkes she found her real master. Capricious and high-tempered, to Jack she was all gentleness and humility. Then, one night, she became jealous over his attentions to another woman. There was a terrible quarrel. Marianne lost control of her temper to such an extent that Wilkes, who was already beginning to tire, made it an excuse to break with her forever and to turn to pastures new.

Soon after his release from prison Wilkes had printed an "Essay on Woman" that brought down upon him the condemnation of all England. Pope's "Essay on Man," was one of the great poems of the day. And the "Essay on Woman" was a rhymed effusion along the same lines, yet so unbelievably cynical and brutal in its attack on womanhood that every chivalrous man felt outraged.

Strangely enough, the poem seems to have enhanced Wilkes' lure as a heart-breaker, instead of making women detest him. Not only "the ugliest man in England," but also—as the essay proved—the avowed insulter of the other sex, he nevertheless grew more and more popular with women. His magnetism offset his ugliness. His charm of manner made people forgive the profane and vulgar language which he used.

The courts branded the essay as "an impious libel," and ordered Wilkes' arrest. Parliament slammed its doors in his face. The police hunted for him, but he was not to be found.

About this time, he fought a duel—supposedly over a political quarrel; but, it is said, a woman had more to do with it than had politics. At any rate, Wilkes ran across to Paris until the unsavory affair should blow over. And there he stayed, eluding the British police and killing time with the French women who made fools of themselves over him.

During his visit to France he met Mademoiselle Dufort. She was a wicked, but extremely pretty woman—and she found Wilkes utterly irresistible. The man flung himself into this intrigue with ardor for a while, and it became the talk of Paris. But as soon as Wilkes thought the authorities at home had forgotten his misdeeds, he turned his back on the gay French city, returned to England and forgot Mademoiselle Dufort.

Again he was elected to Parliament. He was promptly arrested on the former charges. But the people at large had learned to adore him. They looked on him as a martyr to tyranny. On his way to prison the mob rescued him from the police. When Parliament met, the mob escorted him to the House of Commons in order to guard him from further arrest.

The militia were ordered to disperse the crowd, and a riot followed in which many people were hurt and one man was killed. Wilkes openly denounced this as a "massacre" and accused the secretary of state of having planned it. For this he was again expelled from Parliament. The people at once reelected him, and kept on reelecting him as fast as the courts declared each election void!

Wilkes, who was in prison at this time, was hailed not only as a martyr, but as the Champion of Liberty. He became the most popular man in England. Public opinion at last secured his freedom and made him lord mayor of London. This was the apex of his career. His position in society was

thereafter unquestioned. King and court made peace with him.

George III. spoke of him as "the most monstrous, well-bred lord mayor" he had ever met.

A wave of this popularity crossed the seas. In 1772, when a band of pioneers from Connecticut founded a Pennsylvania town, they named it Wilkes-Barre, in honor of John Wilkes and his colleague, Isaac Barre.

The man was wholly unprincipled. He had no love for the people and never rendered them any important service. Yet the same wondrous charm that gained him the hearts of women, won him also the devotion of the masses.

Years later, in speaking to George III. of his loyal friend, Sargeant Glynn, he said:

"Ah, sir! He was a Wilkite, which I never was."

At another time, not long before his death, he was crossing the street when he was recognized by an old apple woman. Rising shakily to her full height, the woman curtsied and shouted in a cracked voice:

"Wilkes and liberty!"

"Shut up, you old fool," said Wilkes, laughing and throwing her a sovereign. "That was all over thirty years ago!"

Yet, to give the devil his due, Wilkes was always warm-hearted. He was also most generous and hospitable to his poor relations and to any old friends who had fallen on evil days.

As a relaxation from political cares, Wilkes was wont to run down to Bath; and there he met and infatuated the lovely songbird, Betty Linley, who afterward married Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

All the fashionable world was to be seen, each day, in the Pump Room at Bath; and thither flocked a crowd of charming women at the hour when John Wilkes might be expected to stroll through the room.

His Bath love affairs were legion. Maria Molineux, the Brereton girls, Amelia Arnold and many others fell under the spell of his ugly countenance.

But the one really serious love of his life was Maria Stafford. Had the two met in earlier years, and been able to marry, Wilkes' whole future might have been different. He would have made Maria an ideal husband. The bond of sympathy and understanding between the two was very great.

But when Fate brought them together, the woman was already married to a brute of a husband named William Stafford.

Wilkes and she were seat mates at a dinner at Bath, in 1778. The man's brilliancy arrested Mrs. Stafford's interest at once. Though she had her position as social leader to guard, though she knew Wilkes to be an outrageous heartbreaker, she could not resist playing with fire. Their romance enveloped them in a rosy mist. They carried on a fervid correspondence in French. Wilkes sent his sweetheart bouquets with love notes hidden in the hearts of the flowers. They lived only for each other.

Then, in the heyday of their happiness, came Fate in the form of a worthy old family friend, who first tried to make Mrs. Stafford give up Wilkes. Then, finding this impossible, she went to Wilkes, called him a "cold-blooded, selfish blackguard and told him in very plain language that he was bringing social and moral ruin on Maria Stafford.

To Wilkes' everlasting credit be it said that his love for Mrs. Stafford was so deep and sincere that, for the sake of her reputation, he agreed to end the intrigue. There was a heartbreaking good-by scene, and everything was over. Yet, the two remained close friends all their lives.

Wilkes could not keep himself out of the way of love affairs for long. And women continued to go mad over him to the day of his death, but Maria Staf-

ford was the one and only woman among his myriad sweethearts to whom he gave his whole love.

In 1790, Wilkes was elected chamberlain of the City of London, a post which he held until his death. Strange to say, although he was wildly reckless with his own money, he made an admirable and economical guardian of the city's finances.

In his old age Wilkes found a beautiful summer home at Sandham Cottage, in the Isle of Wight. The sea winds swept about him as he wandered through his lovely gardens or sat idly by his fish pond, dreaming of Maria Stafford.

When his old friends visited him in his garden, he was wont to take them to a Doric column crowned with a Latin inscription to some dead and gone Churchill. After the friend had dutifully admired the column, Wilkes carelessly touched a spot in the pedestal and—presto! The pedestal suddenly changed to an eighteenth-century bar, full of fine old liqueurs. One cannot help wondering at such a device for toddy blossoms in a garden that flowered centuries before "dry agents" were even thought of!

Old friends and old enemies alike, journeyed over to the Isle of Wight to see John Wilkes. His popularity grew

greater instead of less as his strength failed. A visit to him at Sandham Cottage became a fashionable pilgrimage.

Jovial to the last, the King of Hearts loved to speak of himself as "The late John Wilkes."

He was tended by his faithful daughter Polly, for whom his devotion, never flagged. Just before he died he asked for something to drink. As Polly gave him the glass, he looked toward her with the ghost of his whimsical, quizzical smile; and with a flash of his old gallantry whispered:

"I drink to the health of my beloved and excellent daughter."

Then he fell back on his pillow, dead. His tomb bears the inscription:

In this place are interred the remains of John Wilkes, A Friend of Liberty.

Few men have been more beloved.

Few men, perhaps, have less deserved love.

Yet, after more than two centuries have passed, a slight, intangible breath of Wilkes' fascination is borne to us, and one finds one's self laying the heavy burden of his shortcomings at stodgy Mary Mead's door—whether they belong there or not. If, in his youth, he could have married winsome Maria Stafford—things might have been different.



SHORE LEAVE

I SPENT a single day with you;
You took my love away with you;
You think my heart will stay with you,
And you will be its jailer.

But I have called it home again;
My foolish heart won't roam again,
Or wander o'er the foam again,
With any fickle sailor.

RAE ALLEN.



A String of Pearls

By Katherine Glover

JOHN CAREY'S voice had the positive reiteration of the monotone of a drum as, unyielding before the protest of the man at the other end of the phone, he repeated over and over: "Buy, Thornton, buy!" His broad, vigorous shoulders squared with determination as he bent to the receiver.

"How many shares?" Thornton asked weakly, finally capitulating.

"Ten thousand," Carey answered, with the firmness of calculated assurance.

Hanging up the receiver, he sat back in his chair, a smile of triumph curling the corners of his thin, straight mouth.

The next half hour while he dictated to his stenographer there was not the slightest betrayal of the fact that his whole future hung upon the turn of the tide on the floor of the big building seething with madmen three blocks away. As he finished the last letter the phone at his elbow buzzed dully. He took up the receiver deliberately.

"You, Thornton? Yes, hello. . . . Turned the tide, eh? I thought so. I guess the day is won for the Isabella, all right. Not so mad now, Thornton? . . . Thanks, old man. We'll have a celebration soon."

The momentary laxing of his muscles as he sank into his chair was the only sign of the strain of the last half hour.

The stenographer, gathering together her papers, was starting for the door.

"Oh, never mind about those letters to-day, Miss Merrivale," he called. "I

think we'll make the rest of the afternoon a holiday."

As Carey took in the full import of Thornton's news a sense of triumphing power swept through him like an electric current. Every trace of timidity, of hesitation was wiped out of his mind. Though he was a silent man, of deep reserves, at that moment he felt that he could have faced a vast audience and carried them off their feet with the story of his victory. With his single faith and determination he had saved the Isabella Mine. An hour ago it could have been thrust into oblivion for another half century and the world would have been the loser. But he had saved it. Next to the deep, inarticulate love he had for his wife the Isabella Mine was the one great interest of his life.

The connection between the two absorbing loyalties he permitted himself was subtle and close linked. For a long time he had felt, without clearly defining it to himself, that success with one meant success with the other. If he could breast the tide of opposition and skepticism that waged war with him over the possibilities of the Isabella he would win back from his wife something he was in danger of losing, which perhaps he never truly had won in the ten years of their marriage. So he had thrown himself into studying the mine from every possible angle, neglecting everything else for the big issues that were at stake.

Now he had won and there remained to lay his triumph at the feet of the

woman he loved. Involuntarily he turned to the picture in the silver frame that faced him on the desk and as he did so the figures of the calendar fairly jumped out at him—April twelfth. In the absorption, the final concentration on the Isabella he had forgotten that this was the anniversary of their wedding.

Picking up the picture, he studied the uptilted, delicately lovely face with its baffling, deep-set eyes.

What gift could he choose that would make this anniversary stand out significantly, that would symbolize in beauty and value the love that had banked up through the years of their marriage? He had always dreamed of giving Carolyn some day a string of pearls, rich, perfect in their purity, matching the creamy loveliness of her skin. And he realized suddenly that to-day's events made the dream a possibility. In no other way could he tell her more eloquently of the victory of the Isabella.

He called up Barton, an acquaintance who was connected with Carter & Black, uptown jewelers, and made an appointment, then he reserved a table for two at the Ritz for dinner, and left the office.

At Carter & Black's he had to wait while Barton finished with another customer. He could hear the two men within the private salesroom discussing the points of a diamond-and-pearl brooch. At last the door opened and Barton appeared, ushering out a large man with an air of sleek prosperity in his clothes and the stamp of indulgence in his heavy face.

"You have the address?" he asked of Barton with just the faintest flick of a smile as he lifted a jaunty cane to his forehead by way of salute.

The salesman nodded and then beckoned Carey into the salesroom, chuckling with amusement. As he shook hands he leaned toward Carey and whispered the

name of a man well known in financial circles.

"For his latest," he said with a shrug, pointing to the open case on the table with its treasure of diamonds and pearls just purchased.

Intent upon his own gift, Carey felt a moment's repulsion which he tried to cover with a smile.

The room into which he had been shown with its pale-gray walls of silk damask and high wainscoting exactly toning was as exquisite as the lining of a jewel case, but its exotic note made Carey feel uncomfortable, out of place.

"What can I do for you, old man?" asked Barton.

"I want a string of pearls for my wife," answered Carey awkwardly.

"Your wife," repeated Barton with just a faint hint of emphasis, adding with a short laugh: "Nothing like Morton in yours, eh?"

"No," answered Carey with the slightest click of his jaw.

Barton opened the drawers of a case against the wall and took out several boxes, displaying necklaces of fragile, white gems.

He quoted the prices and compared the merits, studying unobserved the face of his customer.

Carey picked up the strings one by one hesitantly as he might have touched a strange woman's hair.

"I don't know much about these things, Barton. I'll have to depend upon you, but I want the best you have. You see, it is a special present, tenth anniversary of our marriage, but it's more than that. I've always wanted to give my wife a necklace of pearls. I've never given her many presents. I don't like giving halfway things. I'd rather sum it all up in one big gift. Maybe I'm wrong as perhaps I'm wrong in not being able to tell what I feel. Women are funny, Barton. A man never quite knows them, not even his own wife. I

want these pearls to say a lot that I can't seem to get into words."

He brought himself up with a short laugh. The success of the Isabella must have gone to his head. It seemed to have loosened his tongue like wine.

Barton became more polite and interested. He brought out the rarest pearls of the firm's stock and laid them on the table and, as he lifted them one by one, his fingers seemed to caress the jewels.

"I've made a study of pearls," he said. "You could hardly fool me on their worth if you blindfolded me. I know the very feel of them. Pearls are as beautiful as women, as beautiful and as deceptive." He laughed cynically. "At the heart of every pearl there's a parasite, as usually there is at the heart of a woman. Pearls are an abnormality, a beautiful accident of nature."

"Damn it, Barton, don't spoil them for me. I've always thought pearls the purest jewels in the world. As to women—I guess we don't agree there."

"You can't spoil pearls," answered Barton. "You may know that they were, at the start, nothing but a grain of sand itching in the side of an oyster, but that takes no whit from their perfection, their beauty. They fascinate one like a beautiful woman. Men like the unexpected, the abnormal, the thing that tricks them."

As he talked he took from a case a string of pearls that glowed softly, warmly beneath the light and drew it reverently across the palm of his hand.

"I have saved this for the last. You can search the country over and you will not find a more perfect string—larger, more costly, perhaps—but in the perfection of the gems, the tone, the matching, you can find nothing to surpass them. They hardly vary the fraction of an inch in size." He placed them on a bed of white cotton beneath the strong light of an unshaded electric globe and they stood the test without showing a blemish,

lustrous, live, with a tint of the palest blue like the veins in Carolyn's temples.

The moment he saw them Carey knew that they belonged to her. He closed the purchase quickly, glad to be rid of Barton and his chatter, walked out into the street with the case in the inner pocket of his coat. He was more conscious of happiness than he ever remembered to have been in his life, with a sense of achievement, of perfect vindication.

As he walked down the Avenue a clock struck four. He wondered if Carolyn were at home and what her surprise would be to see him there in the middle of the afternoon. He had never gone home on a week day since they had been married, always observing rigidly the hours of business. But now he had achieved his hour of relaxation when he and Carolyn could enjoy the fruits of his years of grilling work.

As he reached for his key to open the door he heard the faint ring of the phone inside and he saw Carolyn hurry across the hall to answer it. He smiled at her half-running gait, part of the impulsive eagerness that was characteristic of her.

Closed within the little booth in the hall she did not hear him come in. Through the glass door he could see her in the rose-lined recess which she had, through some impulse, chosen to adorn like a tiny boudoir. The whim had been absurd to him since a telephone was to his mind purely a utilitarian object, yet as with everything she did he had looked on indulgently.

As he watched her delicate profile outlined against the rose of the paneling he admitted that it was a becoming setting for her. Leaning to the instrument, her face flushed softly, one hand lifted, he had a flashing impression of a glorified confessional box and she a penitent who might have made a priest forget his mission.

He opened the door of the coat closet

next to the booth to hang up his things and as he did this he heard in Carolyn's voice, muffled as it was through the wall, a note that held him, a breathless, eager quality that was strange.

"I want to come, Warren, more than I can tell you, but I really don't think I should."

Carey closed the door of the closet softly, shutting himself in. He could hear a faint, buzzing sound while the person at the other end of the line talked.

The buzz stopped.

"Yes, I know I have," said Carolyn, "but to-night I have a feeling I shouldn't. I'm afraid, Warren."

Once more the hushed silence, with that steady clicking against the drum of the receiver.

"I do, Warren. You know that." Her voice was tender, assuring.

Through the wall Carey heard something like a quick, catching sob as she said:

"No, John will be working, of course. He has every night for weeks. I don't know why I feel like this." There followed a half-choked laugh and then, as if she threw fear to the winds, she answered some fresh plea excitedly: "I will, then, Warren. It will be a last gala evening. You mustn't come here. I'll meet you—at seven, the Ritz."

Carey heard the door of the booth open and close, and swift, hurrying steps up the stairs.

Opening the closet door, he half stumbled into the hall.

"Warren Littleton, Warren Littleton," he repeated heavily to himself as he made his way toward his study. His mind for the moment took in nothing further than that. He had to make a big adjustment, and that was the first step—to realize that the oldest friend he had in the world, whom he would have trusted with his very life, would play him a trick like this. The thought of Carolyn he could not face just now. It

was just a stabbing, sickening pain around his heart. It was a blackness that swam before his eyes and blotted out the light, something that would pass or he would surely suffocate. He couldn't live with anything that hurt like that.

Within the quiet dimness of his study he sat at his desk with his head in his hands and tried to clear his brain, to shake himself free of the nightmare. Slowly, clearly he went over what he had heard, repeating it to himself, trying to recapture the tones of Carolyn's voice, to piece together the words that had evoked them. Little by little incidents that had escaped him through the months past swept over him, small evasions which he recalled vividly now, a note to Carolyn in Littleton's handwriting which he had observed one morning, and quickly forgotten. He had to face the bare ugliness of the disclosure which he had stumbled upon. The affair between them must have been of months' standing, perhaps of years, maybe ever since Littleton's return from the West. It could hardly have antedated that.

Carey thought bitterly of his elation of an hour before, of his plans for their anniversary. He drew the jewel case from his pocket and, turning on the reading lamp, held the pearls before him. He recalled with sudden vividness what Barton had said, "At the heart of every pearl is a parasite." "They are as beautiful as women and as deceptive." How he had hated the suggestion.

"Other women maybe," he had said to himself happily, "but not Carolyn."

Under the light the round, lustrous balls seemed to take on a sinister look. He fancied he could detect the imperfection at their hearts, buried beneath the layers of shimmering, white beauty. The mystery of women was as baffling as these gems brought from the waters of tropical seas, their falseness could be as hidden beneath beauty as the imper-

fection at the heart of the pearls. He remembered with clear memory a simple brooch of jet surrounded by pearls which his mother had always worn on dress occasions. It had been her one jewel and he had thought the pearls against her throat rarely lovely. They had given him his first love for pearls. Had they, too, had the taint of imperfection? So deep had the poison of distrust entered his soul that for the moment he could almost imagine that there might have been some flaw in the nature of the mother he had adored.

How long he sat there Carey did not know. He heard at last his wife's step on the stairs and quickly thrust the pearls into his pocket as she turned the handle of the door. She would be surprised, he knew, to see him.

With instinctive protectiveness even in his hour of bitterness he turned to the desk as if absorbed, to give her a moment for preparation.

He did not turn until she spoke.

"Why, John, how do you happen to be here?"

"I wanted to look up some papers," he said lamely, avoiding her eyes.

"How long have you been here?"

There was a little catch in her voice.

"Not long," he said slowly. This time his eyes swept over her with one comprehensive glance. He saw that she wore a new evening gown of silver cloth which made her figure look as slim as a swaying reed. And her hair with its lights of bronze and gold was bound with narrow fillets of silver. Over her arm hung the soft folds of a pomegranate-colored evening wrap. He had never seen her so wholly lovely and alluring. He was torn between the desire to take her in his arms and demand her loyalty to him alone, and the desire to strike and wound her loveliness as she had struck at the roots of his faith. Outwardly he was utterly controlled, quiet, coolly withdrawn, with an air of abstraction.

From beneath the droop of her long

lashes she studied him a moment and attributed the drawn weariness of his face, his aloofness, to the absorption and worry of business.

"Working again to-night, John?"

"As usual," he answered dully, his eyes centered on the long glove she was struggling to fasten.

"The Harrisons called up. They wanted us for dinner. I was hoping you might——"

He didn't let her finish.

"Sorry, it's impossible," he said shortly. The lie was horrible to him.

Her relief was too great to be hidden, but something in his manner held her a moment. She drew closer and caught the lapels of his coat in her gloved fingers.

"Old Woof, Woof"—it was her name for him when he was silent and brooding—"aren't you the least bit afraid to let me go out alone?" She laughed mockingly.

He tried to sting her with the words, "No, I trust you," but they stuck in his throat. He couldn't make them come. It was easier just to pretend to kiss the top of her head, but the faint odor of roses sweeping up to him made him suddenly sick.

She hesitated a moment about her wrap.

"You'd better put it on," he said and held it for her. He thought her hands trembled slightly as they slipped into the wide sleeves.

"Don't sit up for me," she called to him from the doorway, and did not wait to hear his answer.

The front door closed and he heard the soft pur of the car as it started.

When she was gone Carey faced himself despicably. Why had he let her go to keep her tryst? What was he waiting for? Was the blood in his veins water that he stood and talked to her as if nothing had happened? Men killed for things like this.

His wretchedness mowed him down in

sudden groveling despair. He dropped to his desk and buried his head in his hands, impotent before the waves of passionate anger and hatred that swept over him for the man he had trusted; plotting swift, primitive means of revenge, yet hating himself more than he hated Littleton because he knew as he pictured each plot that he would not achieve it, that he would probably go on living his life undramatically, as if nothing had happened, as he had faced his wife just now. What was there that locked his feelings so deep within himself and made it impossible to break through to the surface with the expressions that frightened or charmed a woman like Carolyn?

From thought of her his feelings glanced off. That was a hurt that went beyond the quiver or stir of emotion. It was as if the quick touch of white-hot iron had seared all the nerves at that sensitive point of his nature. The pain shot out at the ends of his nerves, but at the center there was no sensation. He tried to think of her, to work himself up to hatred of her as a man pricks needles into a paralyzed arm, but there was no response.

After a long while some impulse drew him up the stairs to his wife's room. He pressed the button by the door, flooding the room with light, and stood looking about him. As the switching of the light had suddenly brought to his vision all the familiar objects of the room, so the little things that bore the traces of her personality brought her before him more poignantly real than she had been a little while before when she had touched him with her hands. There was the confusion of her clothes hastily thrown over chairs, awaiting the maid's hands, the disorder of her dressing table with its pretty trinkets, the slippers by her bed, the faint odor of sachet from a half-open drawer of lingerie. It all enveloped him like a fine mist that permeated his very soul until suddenly

every chord of his love of ten years throbbled with hunger for what he had lost.

On the wall was a picture of her taken in her wedding dress. He stood before it, staring deep into the half-veiled eyes. Never, even to this day, had he been able to look into her eyes coolly and undisturbed. He had never been quite sure of their color. They seemed to hold veils of one color over another so that sometimes they were gray-green like the sea and sometimes, when she was stirred, they were deeply blue and again they held sparks of brown and of golden sunlight and the lashes were both brown and gold, frail curtains of mystery.

Her beauty came back to him with stabbing sharpness, the delicate fineness of her features, the creamy softness of her skin, the flexible, provocative mouth that gave life and vivacity to her face, contradicting the dreaminess of her eyes. Why had she made him love her? Why had she married him, with his slow-going, quiet ways, when she might have chosen any one of a dozen others more akin to her?

He had never really known her. He had been content to adore her, with a love that was the motive of his every coming and going, although he could not have made her understand, could not have put it in words. The pearls were to have done that for him. He thought of what he had told Barton that afternoon and he laughed, a hard, bitter laugh. Had Barton known better than he what lay at the heart of women, as he had known what lay at the heart of pearls?

He opened the case once more and stared at the jewels. Pushing aside the ivory toilet things on the dressing table he laid them there for a moment, alone in the center, conspicuous in their beauty. The consciousness of all the pearls had symbolized to him swept over him; of what they would have meant to

Carolyn if things had been as he had dreamed and she had come upon them lying like this upon her dressing table.

They mocked him with their cool serenity. In a sudden fury he tore them from the case and his hand closed over them in an impulse to crush them as she had crushed his faith, but the touch of the hard jewels brought him back to his senses like words of cold, irrevocable logic. The absurdity of his act, the absurdity of all he had been thinking swept over him. After all, what had happened? Was not his wife exactly the same person for whom he had bought the jewels a few hours before? Everything was as it had been for months, years perhaps, except that a few chance words had struck upon a cell of his brain. Why did it make such a difference just to know? Was there not some means by which a man might woo himself back into oblivion, draw the veil over his own brain?

He stood for a moment looking into the mirror, searching his face with slow, deliberate gaze as if he looked at a stranger, repelled by the gray mist of weariness that filmed his eyes, by the tense lines of pain from nostril to mouth. All the swift visions of avenging his hurt returned to him. Life had beaten upon him. Now it was his turn to strike back, but his mind played over the primitive retaliations he had conceived with whimsical scorn as at a child's toys newly outgrown. How easy they would have been, and how futile. But one course lay open to him, sure, irrevocable, fraught with difficulties and adventures that were strange to him. Carey was the kind, once he saw his goal, to hew a straight path. Glancing at his watch he saw that it was nine o'clock. He recalled the table engaged at the Ritz. He closed the door behind him and went to his room to dress.

Half an hour later, freshly shaven, he turned to the mirror for the last adusting touch to his evening tie as

a gladiator might have shifted his toga before his entrance into the arena. He did not see all that the mirror gave back, the quiet strength of the tall, compact figure, the accentuated outlines of the face ending in the strong molding of the chin, the level, clear gaze of the eyes.

At the door of the crystal room of the Ritz he paused just the fraction of a second for a final bracing while he glanced over the room, at the tables, empty or gaping with the absence of those whom the music had drawn to the center of the room, at the moving sea of color which the dancers made. In the midst of the floating mass of turquoise, crimson, shimmering white, he caught one glinting flash of silver.

The head waiter approached, led the way to a table at the edge of the dancers where two chairs were tipped expectantly. Carey paused to light a cigarette before he took the card the waiter held at his elbow. Before the match had died one of the couples, arrested by a false step, came suddenly to a halt before him, and Carolyn and Warren Littleton stared down at him. There was no moment of preparation for them. Their faces were swept by the raw shock of his presence and the consciousness of their own guilt. Littleton's ease of manner was gone and a blanched look of fear gave him an appearance of sudden shriveling before he could summon an attempt at bravado.

Carolyn, quicker to recover, stooped to an imaginary tear in her frock.

"What stupidity," she muttered.

"This is great luck, old man," said Littleton with a sharp edge in his voice, followed by Carolyn speaking breathlessly, her words falling turbulently one over another as if she were afraid of pauses.

"You'll join us, of course, John. The Harrisons couldn't come at the last moment. Did I mention it was here we were to dine?"

Carey stood a moment, looking at them with cool gaze.

"I had an unexpected call to meet a business acquaintance here. I've been delayed and am not sure but I've missed him." He took out his watch. "Another fifteen minutes will tell. If he doesn't come I'll join you."

They threaded their way through the dancers to their table a few feet away where he could follow every gesture and move, almost hear the words they spoke, although for the most part they were silent, awkward, with only an occasional pretense at conversation. His eyes met theirs casually with an undisturbed air of ease while he apparently searched the room for his confrère. When the fifteen minutes were up he dismissed the waiter and joined them.

"I thought dancing made one hungry," commented Carey, pointing to the un-statted ices on the table before them.

"We only ordered to hold the table," said Carolyn defensively.

The music started again, a waltz, insidious, soft in its rhythm. Carey knew little about music, but it made him nervous.

"Why don't you dance?" he asked.

"Why dance when one must forgo good company?" asked Littleton, regaining something of his *savoir-faire*.

"I'm tired," said Carolyn.

"I like to watch," urged Carey. "If I can't dance myself, I can at least have the pleasure of watching Carolyn."

Reluctantly they moved on to the floor when the waltz was half over. Carey, looking on, saw the tensing of their figures away from each other, the uneven mating of their steps. As he watched he realized for the first time that he could look at Carolyn fearlessly, calmly, as an outsider might look at her, all of his own shortcomings forgotten, a new sense of mastery taking possession of him. The two there on the floor had suddenly become his puppets. Before, one of them had dominated him because

of the blind adulation he had given her, and the other, Littleton, he had looked upon as a Galahad *sans reproche*, by reason of his removal from the struggles he had known and of certain scintillant qualities which he himself lacked, but now—

When Carolyn and Littleton returned from the dance Carey greeted them:

"I think Fate stacked the cards so we three should meet here to-night."

There was embarrassed inquiry in their glances.

"You don't usually pay tribute to fate, John," said Carolyn with a light laugh.

"Not ordinarily, but to-day I do. The Isabella Mine was firmly and finally established on the map of Wall Street to-day—and that means the map of the world."

"That's great news, John. Congratulations!" returned Littleton. Carey thought he detected a shade of envy in his voice. He was beginning to see Warren Littleton anew, free of the glamour of his charm, his subtler knowledge of the world's ways, with the same clear analysis with which he was beginning to see Carolyn. Hitherto he had accepted his friend, as he had the woman he had married, without reservation or judgment.

Carolyn's response to the news was more personal.

"Why didn't you tell me this evening when I saw you?"

"You were hurried," answered Carey indifferently.

"There was time for that," she reminded, quickly seizing the chance to shift to him some of the burden of blame which she carried within herself, and resenting this casual sharing of news which meant so much to him.

"You've waited a long time for this, John," said Littleton, his eyes fixed on the tip of his cigarette.

Carey's gaze followed with a smile, noting the nervousness with which Lit-

tleton's long, thin fingers played with his neglected cigarette.

"I've waited a lifetime and part of my father's before me—and my mother's." He said the last half under his breath as if he had forgotten them for the moment; then, leaning forward on the table, he embarked upon the story of the Isabella Mine. His father, accounted by the world a failure and a dreamer, had thrown up the interests of civilization, the earnings of a professorship in a small Eastern college, and finally had given his life to prove the discovery of minerals of immense value to the world. And after his death his mother had stayed by the mine in the hope of proving her husband's claim. Unused to the rigors of the Western mountain climate and to the hardships of manual labor, she had kept a boarding house for the men of the mining section, pinching and slaving through the years to save enough to give her son the foundations of an education as a mining engineer so that he might carry on more practically the work his father had started.

"I never saw my mother flinch at anything," said Carey, unfolding the story of the past. "We stood shoulder to shoulder through the years after my father died. It used to go hard when I saw her working in the kitchen to satisfy the appetites of a swarm of coarse miners who weren't fit to touch the tips of her shoes. Once I remember an ugly brute who was drunk"—he checked himself with a shudder at the memory—"I would have killed him with a chunk of ore, but one of the others got ahead of me. I remember that night, in the darkness of my own room, I cried into my pillow at the sheer ugliness of it all. I can hear now the wailing of the coyotes out of the black, still night and the heavy breathing of a lodger in the room next to mine. I swore then I would take my mother out of it all and that never, if I could help it, would I let any other

woman look upon the harshness of life which she had seen."

He paused a moment.

"A night like that makes a difference in a boy's life. They were not pretty days out there and yet there were things a boy could not help learning, the clear-cut, inflexible standards that prevail among rough men, the freedom one gets in untamed countries, values untainted by a too complex civilization. When I came East to college I brought my mother with me and left her with relatives while I bucked the game of putting myself through college, but for all the hardships of the life, her heart was in the West. She was cowed by the pampered ease of the world she had once known. Or perhaps it was that with the lightening of the long tension the strain of the years told. She didn't live through my second year in college."

As he talked Carolyn was toying with the silver on the table and Littleton was idly sketching on the back of a menu card. Carey stared out across the gay picture of the room.

"I wonder," he resumed quietly, "what to-day would have meant to *her*?" And then with a short laugh he added, bringing himself to the present: "It's a long way from those days to this room in the Ritz-Carlton with its soft luxury. I've done a lot of things in the twenty years since I left the West, but the Isabella has lain back of every endeavor. It has taken me that long to ram it down the throat of Wall Street, but I've done it at last, forced it to the attention of the world. And now"—he leaned back in his chair and his eyes turned to the other two—"I've won my right to leisure, to play. I'm afraid I've almost forgotten how. You two will have to show me, to be my guides."

Carolyn stirred uneasily in her chair and the swift color swept her face.

"Oh, see here," Littleton demurred, "Carolyn can guide you. You don't need me!"

"Yes, you, too, Warren. You have the eternal gift of play. We need a Pied Piper to lead the way." If there was a shade of fine sarcasm it passed unnoted by the others in their uneasiness. "Besides," added Carey, "we should be selfish to take our pleasure alone. You are one of us."

No one spoke for a moment.

"What do you say to a celebration a week from to-night, say at Sherry's or Pierre's? You'll join us, Warren?"

Littleton hesitated a moment as if to frame an excuse, but he answered lamely.

"If you're sure you want me. Of course, old man."

During the week that followed life flowed on without apparent incident or change for the Careys. One evening when John came home earlier than usual he found on the table in the hall a florist's box evidently hastily opened. In the crushed folds of the paper was a card. He glanced at it.

These perhaps will tell you what I have not been able to in person.

He put it back with a grim smile. It told him what he wished to know. There had been no more meetings.

The next day Littleton phoned John Carey at his office to say he would be unable to join them for the dinner as he had been called out of town.

"When will you be back?" asked Carey.

"I'm not just sure," Warren answered vaguely. "There's a fussy job that may keep me several days."

"We'll postpone the party, then," Carey replied firmly. "It won't be a celebration without you."

Littleton, pressed, reluctantly made the date for a few evenings later.

Carey left the ordering of the menu to the chef at Sherry's and the table of the private dining room to the manager, except to stipulate that the flowers must be wood violets and freesias and that

8—Ains.

everything was to be as beautiful as possible. He wanted a perfect setting for his little game.

When they entered the room it seemed to sparkle and sing with color. There were goblets of amber glass with service plates of gold and old blue. An amber compote held brilliant-colored fruits and at the base were softly massed a bed of the white and deep-purple flowers. Tall candles lighted the table softly.

"Oh, John," exclaimed Carolyn, "it's like a dream come true!" She tucked her arm in his for just a moment.

"That's what I had hoped," he said quietly, without response to her touch.

"I congratulate you," said Littleton. "It's really an achievement to be able to wave the fairy wand like that."

"It would mean nothing unless one could share it," said Carey significantly as they took their seats.

Through the first course they were quiet save for flashes of comment from Carolyn on the plate, the arrangement of the table, a woman's scattering of pleasantry over a vaguely sensed chasm of danger.

After the soup the waiter brought in a tray of flowers, a corsage bouquet of violets and freesias and tiny boutonnières of the same.

"John, you are an old dear," said Carolyn as she took the corsage bouquet from the tray. In the center she discovered a silver ribbon. "There's something there!" she exclaimed in surprise, drawing it gently from its fragrant nest, and the necklace of pearls fell upon the table.

She held it up in her hand, much as Barton had that day in the store, and her eyes gleamed softly at its beauty and then dropped for an instant, the color leaving her face until it was as white as the pearls.

"They are too lovely. I've done nothing to deserve them, while you,

John——" She left the sentence unfinished.

Carey was apparently unobservant of her embarrassment.

"Do you know anything about pearls?" he asked of Littleton.

"They've been pretty much out of my reckoning, except the bowing acquaintance one has with those in shop windows and on the necks of fair ladies."

"I learned a curious thing about them the other day when I bought this necklace for Carolyn. Pearls had always symbolized purity to me. I suppose they do to most people, but I found that they are really an abnormality, an accident in the life of the oyster, that they are, at the start, a parasite or a tiny grain of sand. The oyster throws a sort of armor—which later becomes the pearl—around this parasite to protect itself against the unwelcome intruder. I'd never known that before. Curious, isn't it, that a thing so perfect could have an imperfection, a real ugliness at the heart of it? The idea has haunted me."

"I never knew you were a sentimentalist, before. It takes you business men to be carried away by romantic symbolism," laughed Littleton.

"Business is full of romance and symbolism, too; of stories like the Isabella Mine where a man willingly gives his life to a single faith." He turned to his wife. "You haven't tried on your necklace?"

"No," she said, "I'd rather wait. They don't go with this gown, I am content to admire them."

The party broke up early with an excuse on Littleton's part. When he left them Carey said casually:

"I may have to be away during the next few months, Warren. I shall expect you to see that Carolyn isn't bored."

"I don't know that I can qualify," he answered, "but I shall try."

"I think I can take care of myself," said Carolyn with a lift of her head.

As they drove home in the car both

she and Carey were quiet. When they reached home he turned to her quickly.

"I think I'll read a little before I turn in."

After a pause, Carolyn said gently: "It was very beautiful, John. I don't know how to thank you."

"Don't try," he said. "There is a certain satisfaction in carrying out a cherished plan."

"But I'd like to find a way to thank you," she said softly. "I'm glad life has paid its debt to you at last, John. You deserve a great deal." And then, after a moment's hesitation, she added: "I think I never knew you until now."

She drew nearer with a timidity new to her. He saw that her eyes were wet and that they were no longer veiled with mystery or defense. He read in her a tenderness, a surrender he had never felt before. With all the loneliness and hunger of his soul he yearned for her, but the thought of Littleton turned him to ice. It was his moment, but it was bitter to his taste. He turned away.

"I shall be up early in the morning. Don't bother about breakfast."

At her plate at the table the next morning Carolyn found a note that read briefly:

I am taking an early train in the morning for the West. The Isabella Mine will need my attention for the next few months. My playtime was short, but it taught me much; first that you and I are not suited to each other and it was a mistake that we should have married; second, that Littleton and you are suited to each other and have found it out. During my absence I will arrange matters so that you will be free to marry. The pearls will be your wedding gift. It may interest you to know that I bought them for our anniversary, but I learned that day not only the mystery of pearls, but how much likeness there may be between the nature of a woman and the nature of a pearl.

JOHN.

The way to the adobe hut near the Isabella Mine where John had taken up his abode wound through a narrow path niched into the side of the mountain.

The rain beat in a gray sheet upon Carey as he picked his way along the slippery path through the dusk of a late afternoon on his way back from the mine, holding to rocks and jutting branches of trees in places where a turn made the way perilous. As he rounded the last bend and saw the hut below him he could almost fancy that he saw through the rain a fluff of smoke rising from the chimney, but he knew it must be a trick of his imagination. He plowed on with head down, his boots heavier at every step with mud.

At the threshold of the cabin he stopped and scraped his boots against the side of a rock before the door. There was a low sound inside like some one humming which stopped at his approach. He waited a moment, then threw the door open curiously. The room was lighted by a bright blaze of logs and before the fire a woman stooped, with her back to him. She turned at his entrance and for an instant the two looked at each other with a frankness of gaze which tore down the barriers of the past.

"Why did you come?" asked Carey.

"Because, I *had* to come," she said.

"And if I don't want you, after all that has happened?"

"I should still have come."

She walked quickly toward him and stood facing him while she spoke.

"I should have come if only to tell you what I have to say face to face, and then gone straight back. You have told your side of the story, John, but you haven't heard mine. I want you to listen. You left me as a child might leave a doll or a toy which is broken or disfigured, without waiting to find out what was in my heart, what lay back of the discovery that sent you away. You married me in much the same way without probing my feelings.

"You threw around me pretty walls of shelter, coatings of beautiful, material things, much as the oyster throws its walls around the parasite which becomes the pearl, but you did not realize you were hardening what was real in me, imprisoning it with your protectiveness so that I hardly knew myself it was there, might never have known if it had not been for the breaking through of the shell that night of your dinner. I was a fool to live within the inclosure, but I didn't know it was tightening around me so. I had dreamed of helping you.

"It was your quiet strength, your steadfastness to ideals that first drew me, but there was no place for me in your self-sufficiency. I could not reach to the recesses I had dreamed of reaching and so I tried to content myself by playing over the surface of life.

"That night when you told me of your mother I knew it was she who was really enshrined in your heart, because you had worked side by side with her, shared the same experiences, while I was a stranger to you. I envied your mother, John, as I have never envied any one in my life. I wanted to throw those pearls at you, to tear the rings from my fingers and tell you to take them all, and give me the one thing I wanted, the companionship of sharing with you. I hated the luxury which you bought with effort in which I had no part—it smothered me."

The look that kindled in his face as she talked was that of a man to whom an amazing thing has been revealed. He could not speak. He drew her hands down from her throat and kissed them.

"So I've come, John," she said at last, "to take care of my man, to help him."

"We'll play the game of life together, as mates," he answered as their lips met in their first kiss of understanding.



THE STORY SO FAR.

Penelope Craig was always conscious of a sense of foreboding when she thought of Nan Davenant with whom she lived in London and whose brilliant future as a pianist was of more absorbing interest to her than her own career as a singer—for Nan was a gifted musician. She was afraid, too, of the effect of a recent, unfortunate love affair on a girl of Nan's temperament. Maryon Rooke, a rising young artist, had won Nan's love, but while he cared for her, he frankly admitted that art came first with him—and love a poor second. So he left London to go abroad and Nan felt that her moon was, indeed, out of reach. Several weeks after his departure Nan started to Exeter alone to play at a charity concert. On the way there she was twice rescued by a good Samaritan whose name, she learned, was Peter Mallory. Back in London, later in the week, Nan met Mallory again at the Seymours' dinner party. From Kitty Seymour she found out that Peter had written the most-talked-of book of the year—and that he was married to a woman who had almost wrecked his life; they had separated and his wife was living in India. Nan was conscious of a curious sense of loss at the discovery of Peter's marriage, but, as the weeks grew into months, she began to depend more and more on Peter's friendship. Mallory realized, finally, that Nan and Love were coming to him hand in hand, and, although that word remained unspoken between them, they both perceived the truth. When Maryon Rooke again appeared, Nan knew at once that she was completely indifferent to him, but Peter—who saw them together—thought that she still cared for Maryon. He therefore determined to leave Nan free to take her happiness and declined Kitty's invitation to spend some time with them at Mallow Court while Nan was there. Later in the summer, at Mallow Court, Nan, hurt because of Peter's unaccountable silence, amused herself with Roger Trenby, a sportsman and near neighbor. On a visit to his kennels, Nan was attacked by the pack of hounds before he was able to reach her. The accident precipitated Roger's proposal and Nan promised to marry him, but immediately afterward pleaded for more time to think over her answer. It was when she learned that Penelope had refused to marry Ralph Fenton, whom she loved, because Nan herself needed her, that Nan finally determined to tell Roger of her love for another man and, if he wanted her in spite of that, to marry him. And, to her dismay, Roger *did* want her. The day after the announcement of their engagement Peter arrived at Mallow Court. On Nan's first visit to Trenby Hall she realized that Roger's mother disapproved of her. Patently, her own choice of wives for her son had been Isobel Carson, her niece, who lived with them. When Nan returned to Mallow Court that afternoon she rode over to Tintagel to banish the thought of her unhappy encounter with Lady Gertrude. Though she was sure-footed as a rule, she felt unaccountably nervous as she climbed the steep promontory to King Arthur's castle—and it was only by dogged force of will that she was able to reach the security of the castle itself and, having reached it, her limbs gave way and she toppled over in a dead faint just inside the castle door. It was late that night when Peter, one of a searching party sent out from Mallow, mounted swiftly to the castle and found her lying there. His great relief shattered his self-control. For the first time he kissed her. But they had only a moment of happiness and when they returned to Mallow Court Peter had already said good-by to Nan and Love. In the days that followed Nan's only joy was in the contemplation of the happiness of Penelope and Ralph. For herself, though Peter had given her the keys of his heart, she could never use them to unlock the door of heaven.

The Moon Out of Reach

By Margaret Pedler

Author of "The Lamp of Fate,"
"The House of Dreams Come True," etc.



CHAPTER XVIII.

WITHIN a fortnight of Mallory's departure from St. Wennys, the whole of the house party at Mallow had scattered. Lord St. John was the first to go—leaving in order to pay a short visit to Eliza McBain before returning to town. Often though she might scarify him with her sharp tongue she was genuinely attached to him, and her clannishly hospitable soul would have been sorely wounded if he had not spent a few days at Trevarthen Wood, while he was in the neighborhood. Ralph Fenton had been obliged to hurry north to fulfill an unexpected concert engagement and, on the same day, Barry left home to join a shooting party in Scotland. A few days later Nan and Penelope returned to London, accompanied by Kitty, who asserted an unshakable determination to take part in the orgy of spending which Penelope's forthcoming wedding would entail.

Meanwhile, Ralph had secured his future wife's engagement as a member of the concert party—by the simple method of declining to accept the American tour himself unless she were included, so that to the joy of buying a trousseau was added the superlative delight of choosing special frocks for Penelope's appearances on tour in the States. Lord St. John had insisted upon presenting the trousseau. Barry Seymour made himself responsible for the

concert gowns, and Kitty announced that the wedding was to take place from her house in Green Street.

For the first time in the whole of her brave, hard-working life, Penelope knew what it was to spend as she had seen other women spend, without being driven into choosing the second-best material of the less becoming frock for the unsatisfying reason that it was the cheaper. The two men had given Kitty *carte blanche* as regards expenditure and she proceeded to take full advantage of the fact, promptly quelling any tentative suggestions toward economy which Penelope, rather overwhelmed by Mrs. Seymour's lavish notions, occasionally put forth.

The date on which the concert party sailed was already fixed, leaving a bare month in which to accomplish the necessary preparations, and the time seemed positively to fly. Nan evaded taking part in the shopping expeditions which filled the days of Penelope and Kitty, since each new purchase served only to remind her that the approaching parting with Penelope was drawing nearer.

Nan sat staring into the fire—for the first breath of autumn had already chilled the air—trying to realize that to-day was actually the eve of Penelope's wedding day. It seemed incredible, and even more incredible that Kitty and she should have gone off laughing together to see about some detail of the

next day's arrangements which had been overlooked.

She was suddenly conscious that if this were the eve of her own marriage with Roger laughter would be far away from her. Regarded dispassionately, her decision to marry him because she couldn't marry the man she loved seemed rather absurd and illogical. She had rushed recklessly into her engagement, regarding marriage with Roger much as though it were a stout set of palings with "No Right of Way" written across them in large letters. Outside, the waves of emotion might surge in vain, while within she and Roger would settle down to the humdrum placidity of married life. But the dull, ceaseless ache at her heart made her sometimes question whether anything in the world could keep at bay the insistent claim of love.

She tried to reassure herself. At least, there would always remain her music and the passionate delight of creative work. These and other disconnected thoughts flitted fugitively through her mind as she sat waiting for Penelope's return. Vague visions of the future; memories—hastily slurred over; odd, rather frightened musings on the morrow's ceremony, when Penny would bind herself to Ralph "in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation."

Rather curiously Nan reflected that she had never actually read the marriage service, only caught chance phrases here and there in the course of other people's marriages. She switched on the lights and hunted about for a Book of Common Prayer, turning the pages with quick, nervous fingers till she came to one headed: "The Solemnization of Matrimony."

Her eyes flew along the words of the service, skimming hastily over the tender beauty of the vows the man and woman give each other. For they are only beautiful if love informs them. To

Nan they were rather terrifying with their suggestion of irrevocability.

"So long as ye both shall live."

Why, she and Roger were young enough to anticipate thirty or forty years together! Thirty or forty years—before death came and released them from each other. Driven by circumstances, she had not stopped to consider the possible duration of marriage when she pledged her word to Roger.

Latterly, Nan had been feeling quite affectionately disposed toward him—he was really a dear in some ways! And she had accepted an invitation to spend part of the winter at Trenby Hall.

The Seymours had planned to go abroad for several months and, since Penelope would be married and on tour, it had seemed a very natural solution of matters. So that when Lady Gertrude's rather stiffly worded letter of invitation had arrived, Nan accepted it, determining in her own mind that, during the visit, she would try to overcome her mother-in-law's dislike for her. The knowledge of how much Roger loved her and of how little she was really able to give him in return made her feel that it was only playing the game to please him in any way she could. And she recognized that, to a man of Roger's ideas, the fact that his wife and mother were on good terms with one another would be a source of very definite satisfaction.

But now, as she reread the solemn phrase: "So long as ye both shall live," she was seized with panic. To be married for ten, twenty, forty years, perhaps, with never the hand of happy chance—the wonderful, enthralling "might be" of life—to help her to endure it! With a little, stifled cry she sprang up and began pacing the room restlessly—up and down, up and down, her slim hands clenching and unclenching as she walked.

Presently—she could not have told whether it was five minutes or five hours

later—she heard the click of a latchkey in the lock. At the sound, the imperative need for self-control rushed over her. Penelope, of all people, must never know, never guess that she wasn't happy in her engagement to Roger. She didn't intend to spoil Penny's own happiness by the faintest cloud of worry on her account.

She snatched up the prayer book she had let fall and, switching off the lights, dropped down on the hearthrug, just as Penelope came in, fresh and glowing from her walk.

"All in the dark?" she queried as she entered. "You look like a kitten curled up by the fire." She stooped and kissed Nan with unwonted tenderness. Then she turned up the lights and drew the curtains across the window, shutting out the gray October twilight.

"Penny," said Nan, fingering the prayer book, "have you ever read the marriage service?"

Penelope's face lightened with a sudden radiance.

"Yes, isn't it beautiful?"

Nan stared at her.

"Beautiful?" She gave an odd little laugh. "It sounds to me much more like a commination service. Doesn't it frighten you?"

"Not a bit." Penelope's serenely happy eyes confirmed her quick denial.

"Well"—Nan regarded her contemptively—"it rubs in all the dreadful things that may happen to you, like ill health, and poverty, and 'for worse'—whatever that may mean—and dins into your ears the fact that nothing but death can release you."

"You're looking at the wrong side of it, Nan. It seems to me to show just exactly *how much* a husband and wife may be to each other, and how—together—they can face all the ills that flesh is heir to."

"Reminds one of a visit to the dentist—you can screw your courage up more

easily if some one goes with you," remarked Nan grimly.

"You're simply determined to look on the ugly side of things," protested Penelope.

"And yet, Penny dear, at one time you used to scold me for being too idealistic in my notions!"

But Penelope declined to shift her present standpoint.

"And now you're expecting so little that, when your turn comes, you'll be beautifully disappointed," she remarked as she left the room in order to finish some odds and ends of packing.

In her capacity of sole bridesmaid Nan followed Penelope's tall, white-clad figure up the aisle. Each step was taking her friend farther away from her and nearer to the man whom the next half hour would make her husband. With a swift leap of the imagination, she visioned herself in Penelope's place, leaning on Lord St. John's arm—and the man who waited for her at the chancel steps was Roger! She swayed a moment, then by an immense effort forced herself back to the reality of things, following steadily once more in the wake of her uncle and Penelope.

There seemed to be something dreamlike in their slow progression. The atmosphere was heavy with the scent of flowers, a sea of blurred faces loomed up at her from the pews on either side, and the young, sweet voices of the choristers soared high above the organ. She stole a glance at her uncle. He looked frailer than usual, she thought, with a sudden pang of apprehension; perhaps the heat of the summer had told upon him a little. Then her gaze ran on to where the bridegroom stood, the tall altar lights flickering behind him, his face turned toward the body of the church, and his eyes, very bright and steady, resting on Penelope as she approached.

He stepped forward quickly as she

neared the chancel and Nan saw that a smile passed between them as he took his place beside her. A feeling of reassurance crept over her, quieting the sense of almost breathless panic which had, for a moment, overwhelmed her when she had pictured herself in Penny's place. There was dear old Ralph, looking quite ordinary and matter of fact, only rather sprucer than usual in his brand-new wedding garments. The feeling of reassurance deepened. Marriage wasn't so appalling. Good heavens! Dozens of people were married every day and she was quite sure they were not all wildly in love with each other.

Then the service commenced and the soft rise and fall of responsive voices murmured through the church.

It was over very quickly—Nan almost gasped to find how astonishingly short a time it takes to settle one of the biggest things in life. In a few minutes the scented dimness of the church was exchanged for the pale gold of the autumn sunlight, the hush of prayer for the throb of waiting cars.

Later still, when the afternoon was spent, came the last handshakings and kisses. A rising chorus of good wishes, a dust of confetti, the closing of a door, and then the purr of a car as Penelope and Ralph were borne away on the first stage of that new, untried life into which they were adventuring together.

Nan's face wore a queer look of strain as she turned back into the house. Once more the shadow of the future had fallen across her—the shadow of her marriage with Roger Trenby.

CHAPTER XIX.

A sense of bustle and mild excitement pervaded Trenby Hall. The hounds were to meet some distance away and a hunting morning invariably necessitated the services of at least two of the menservants and possibly those of an

observant maid to get Roger off successfully.

"My hunting boots, Jenkins!" he demanded as he issued from the library. "And look sharp with them! Flask and sandwich case—that's right." He busied himself bestowing these two requisites in his pockets.

Nan, cool and unperturbed, joined him in the hall, a small, amused smile on her face. She had been at Trenby long enough to be well used to the cyclone which habitually accompanied Roger's departure to the meet, and the boyish unreasonableness of it rather appealed to her. He was like a big, overgrown schoolboy returning to school, and greatly concerned as to whether his cricket bat and tuck box were safely included in his baggage.

"You, darling?" Roger nodded at her perfunctorily, preoccupied with the necessities of the moment. "Now, have I got my pipe?" He slapped his pockets to ascertain. "Matches! I've no matches! Here, Morton," he called to the butler who was standing by with a hunting crop in his hand, "got any matches?"

Morton produced a box at once. He had been in Roger's service from boyhood and no demand of his master's had yet found him unprepared. Nan was wont to declare that had Roger requested the crown jewels Morton would have immediately procured them from his pocket.

Outside, a groom was patiently walking a couple of horses up and down. Quivering, velvety nostrils snuffed the keen air, while gleaming, black hoofs danced gently on the gravel drive, executing little side steps of excitement. Further along clustered the pack, the hounds padding restlessly here and there, but kept within bounds by the occasional crack of a long-lashed whip or a gruff command from one of the whips.

Nan was always conscious of a curi-

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ous intermingling of feelings when, as now, she watched Roger ride away at the head of the hounds. The day she had almost lost her life at the kennels recurred to her mind inevitably—those moments of swift and terrible danger when it seemed as though nothing could save her. And with that memory came another—the memory of Roger flinging himself forward to the rescue, forcing back with his bare hands the great hound which had attacked her. A quick thrill ran through her at the recollection. No woman can remain unmoved by physical courage—especially if it is her own imperative need which has called it forth.

That was the side of Roger which she liked best to dwell upon. But she was rapidly learning that he had other less attractive sides. As he grew accustomed to her presence in the house he settled down more or less tranquilly into the normal ways of existence, and sometimes, when things went awry, he would lose his temper pretty badly, as is the natural way of man, and she had discovered, too, that Roger was somewhat inclined to play the autocrat.

Unfortunately, Nan's honest endeavors to get on better terms with her future mother-in-law met with no success. Lady Gertrude had presented an imperturbably polite and hostile front almost from the moment of the girl's arrival at the Hall. Even at dinner the first evening she had cast a disapproving eye upon Nan's frock—a diaphanous little garment in black, with veiled gleams of hyacinth and gold beneath the surface, apparently sustained about its wearer by a thread of the same glistening hyacinth and gold across each slender shoulder.

With the quickness of a squirrel Isobel Carson, demurely garbed as befitted a poor relative, noted the disapprobation conveyed by Lady Gertrude's sweeping glance.

"I suppose that's what they're wear-

ing now in town?" she asked conversationally of Nan across the table.

Roger looked up and, seeing the young, privet-white throat and shoulders which gleamed above the black, smiled contentedly.

"It's jolly pretty, isn't it?" he rejoined, innocently unaware that any intention lurked behind his cousin's query.

"It might be—if there were more of it," said Lady Gertrude icily.

"It does look just a tiny bit daring—in the country," murmured Isobel deprecatingly. "You see, we're used to such quiet fashions here."

"I don't think anything can be much quieter than black," replied Nan evenly.

There, for the moment, the matter rested, but the next day Roger had asked her, rather diffidently, if she couldn't find something plainer to wear in the evening.

"I thought you liked the dress," she countered.

"Well—yes. But——"

"But your mother has been talking to you about it? Is that it?"

Roger nodded.

"Even Isobel thought it a little *outré* for country wear," he said eagerly, making matters worse instead of better, in the blundering way a man generally contrives to do when he tries to settle a feminine difference of opinion.

Nan's foot tapped the floor impatiently and a spark of anger glinted in her eyes.

"I don't think my choice of clothes has anything to do with Miss Carson," she answered sharply.

"No, sweetheart, of course it hasn't really. But I know you'd like to please my mother—and she's not used to these new styles, you see."

He stumbled on awkwardly, then drew her up in his arms and kissed her.

"To please me—wear something else," he said.

Not to please him, but because she was genuinely anxious to win Lady

Gertrude's liking, Nan yielded. Perhaps if she conceded this particular point it would pave the way toward a better understanding.

"Very well," she said, smiling. "That especial frock shan't appear again while I'm down here. But it's a duck of a frock, really, Roger!" she affirmed with a feminine sigh of regret.

She was to find, however, as time went on, that there were very many other points over which she would have to accept Lady Gertrude's ruling. Punctuality at meals was regarded at Trenby Hall as one of the laws of the Medes and Persians, and Nan, accustomed to the liberty generally accorded a musician in such matters, failed on more than one occasion to appear at lunch with the promptness expected of her.

In the west parlor, a sitting room which Lady Gertrude herself never used, there was a fairly good piano, and here Nan frequently found refuge, playing her heart out in the welcome solitude the room afforded. Inevitably she would forget the time, remaining entirely oblivious of such mundane things as meals. But she would be sharply reminded of the fact that she had committed an unforgivable sin by receiving a stately message from Lady Gertrude to the effect that they were waiting lunch for her.

On such occasions Nan sometimes felt that it was almost a physical impossibility to enter that formal dining room and face the glacial disapproval manifest on Lady Gertrude's face, the quick glance of condolence which Isobel would throw her—and which always, somehow, filled her with distrust—and the irritability which Roger was scarcely able to conceal.

Roger's annoyance was generally due to the veiled criticism which his mother and cousin contrived to exude prior to her appearance. It nettled him and, accordingly, he felt irritated with Nan for

giving his mother a fresh opportunity for disapprobation.

They were all unimportant things, these small jars and clashes of habit and opinion, but to Nan, who had been used to such absolute freedom, they were like so many links of a chain which held and chafed her. She fretted under them as a caged bird frets. Gradually, too, she was awakening to the limitations of the life which would be hers when she married Roger, realizing that, much as he loved her, he was quite unable to supply her with either the kind of companionship or the mental stimulus her temperament craved and which the little coterie of clever, brilliant people who had been her intimates in town had given her in full measure. The Trenbys' circle of friends interested her not at all. Of the McBains, unfortunately, she saw very little, owing to the distance between the Hall and Trevarthen Wood.

It was, therefore, with a cry of delight that she welcomed Sandy, who arrived in his two-seater shortly after Roger had ridden off to the meet. Lady Gertrude and Isobel had already gone out together, bent upon some parochial errand in the village, so that Nan was alone with her thoughts. And they were not particularly pleasant ones.

"Sandy!" She greeted him with outstretched hands. "You angel boy! I wasn't even hoping to see you for another few weeks or so."

"Just this minute arrived—thought it about time I looked you up again," returned Sandy cheerfully.

"Well, I'm awfully glad you felt moved to come over here this morning. I'm—I'm rather fractious to-day, I think. Do you suppose Lady Gertrude will ask you to stay to lunch?"

"I hope so. But as it's only about ten-thirty a. m., lunch is merely a futuristic dream at present."

"I know. I wonder why there are such enormous intervals between meals

in the country?" said Nan speculatively. "In town there's never any time to do things and meals are a perfect nuisance. Here they seem to be the only breaks in the day."

"That," replied Sandy sententiously, "is because you're leading an idle existence. You're not *doing* anything—so, of course, there's no time to do it in."

"Not doing anything? Well, what is there to do?" She flung out her hands with an odd little gesture of hopelessness. "Besides, I am doing something. I learned how to make puddings yesterday, and to-morrow I'm to be initiated into soup jellies—you know, the kind of stuff you trot round to old women in the village at Christmas time."

"Can't the cook make them?"

"Of course she can. But Lady Gertrude is appalled at my lack of domestic knowledge—so soup jellies it has to be."

Sandy regarded her thoughtfully. She seemed spiritless, and the charming face held a gravity that was quite foreign to it. In the searching winter sunlight he could even discern one or two faint lines about the violet-blue eyes, while the curving mouth, with its provocative, short upper lip, drooped rather wearily at the corners.

"You're bored stiff," he told her firmly. "Why don't you run up to town for a few days and see your pals there?"

Nan shrugged her shoulders.

"For the excellent reason that half of them are away, or—or married or something."

Only a few days before she had seen the announcement of Maryon Rooke's marriage in the papers, and, though the fact that he was married had now no power to wound her, it was like the snapping of yet another link with that happy, irresponsible, bohemian life which she and Penelope had shared together.

"Sandy"—she spoke impetuously—"after I'm—married, I don't think I

shall ever go to London again. It would be like peeping into heaven. Then the door would slam and I'd come back—here! I'm out of it now, out of everything. The others will all go on singing and playing and making books and pictures, right in the heart of it all. While I shall be stuck away here by myself—making soup jellies!"

She sprang up and walked restlessly to the window, staring out at the undulating meadowland.

"I'm sick of the sight of those fields!" she exclaimed almost violently. "The same deadly, dull, green fields day after day. If—if one of them would only turn *pink* for a change it would be a relief!" Her breath caught in a strangled sob.

Sandy followed her to the window.

"Look here, Nan, you can't go on like this." There was an unaccustomed note of decision in his voice; the boyish inflection had gone. "You've no business to be everlastingly gazing at green fields. You ought to be turning 'em into music so that the people who've got only bricks and mortar to stare at can get a whiff of them."

Nan gazed at him in astonishment. This was a new, surprising Sandy who was talking to her with the forcefulness of a man.

"As for being 'out of it,' as you say," he went on emphatically, "if you are, it's only by your own consent. Any one who composes as you can need never be out of it. If you'd only do the big stuff you're capable of doing, you'd be 'in it' right enough! If you were like me, now—not a damn bit of good because I've no technical knowledge—"

In an instant her quick sympathy responded to the note of regret which he could not quite keep out of his voice.

"Sandy, I'm a beast to grumble. It's true—you've had much harder luck." She spoke eagerly, then paused, checked by a sudden, piercing memory. "But—but music, after all, isn't the only thing."

"No," he returned cheerfully. "But it will do quite well to go on with. Have you composed anything new?" he demanded suddenly.

"No," Nan admitted, "but it's impossible to do any work here. Lady Gertrude fairly radiates disapproval whenever I spend an hour or two at the piano, and you know one must be in the right atmosphere to do anything worth while."

"Well, I'm exuding as much as I can," said Sandy. "Atmosphere, I mean. Look here, what about that concerto for pianoforte and orchestra which you had in mind? Have you done anything to it yet?"

She shook her head.

"Then get to work at it quick—and stick to it."

Nan was silent for a few minutes.

"Sandy," she said at length, "you're like a dose of physic—wholesome, but unpalatable. I'll get to work to-morrow. Now let's go out and forage for some food. You've made me fearfully hungry—like a long sermon in church."

Christmas came, bringing with it, at Roger's suggestion, a visit from Lord St. John, and his presence at the house worked wonders in the way of transforming the general atmosphere. Even Lady Gertrude thawed beneath the charm of his kindly, whimsical personality and, to Nan, the few days he spent at the Hall were of more value than a dozen tonics.

"I'm glad to see you in what will one day be your own home, Nan," said Lord St. John. They were sitting alone together in the west parlor, chatting in the cozy intimacy of the fireplace.

"I'd rather you saw it when it is my own home," she returned, with a rueful smile. "It will look very different then, I hope."

"Yet I'm glad to see it now," he repeated.

There was a slight emphasis on the

word—"now," and Nan glanced up in surprise.

"Why now particularly?" she asked. "Are you going to cold-shoulder me after I'm married?"

Lord St. John shook his head.

"That's very likely, isn't it?" he said, smiling. "No, my dear, that's not the reason." He paused as though searching for words, then went on quietly: "The silver chord is getting a bit frayed, you know, Nan. I'm an old man, and I'm just beginning to know it."

She caught her breath quickly and her face whitened. Then she forced a laugh.

"Nonsense, Uncle David! Kitty always declares you're the youngest of us all."

His eyes smiled back at her.

"Unfortunately, my dear, Time takes no account of juvenile spirit. His job is with these bodies of ours. But the spirit," he added dreamily, "and its youthfulness—that's for eternity."

"But you look quite well—quite well," she insisted. And her manner was the more positive because in her inmost mind she thought she could detect a slight increase of that frail appearance she had first noticed on Pendope's wedding day.

"I've had hints, Nan, Nature's wireless. So I saw Jermyn Carter a few weeks back——"

"What did he say?" she interrupted swiftly.

"That at my age a man mustn't expect his heart to be the same as it was in his twenties."

A silence fell between them. Then Nan's hand stole out and clasped his. She had never imagined a world without this good comrade in it. The bare thought of it brought a choking lump into her throat, robbing her of words. Presently St. John spoke again.

"I've nothing to complain about. I've known love and I've known friendship, the two biggest things in life. And,

after all, since—since *she* went, I've only been waiting. The world, without her, has never been quite the same."

"I know," she whispered.

"You Davenant women," he went on more lightly, "are never loved and forgotten."

"And we don't love—and forget," said Nan in a low voice.

St. John looked at her with eyes that held a very tender comprehension.

"Tell me, Nan, was it—Peter Malory?"

She met his glance bravely for a moment.

"Yes," she answered at last, very quietly. "It was Peter." With a sudden shudder she bent forward and covered her face with her hands. "And I can't forget," she said hoarsely.

A long, heavy silence fell between them.

"Then why——" Lord St. John began slowly.

Nan lifted her head.

"Why did I promise Roger?" she broke in. "Because it seemed the only way. I—I was afraid! And then there was Penelope and Ralph. Oh, it was a ghastly mistake. I know now. But—but there's Roger. He cares."

"Yes. There's Roger," he said gravely. "And you've given him your word. You can't draw back now." There was a note of sternness in the old man's voice—the sternness of a man who has a high creed of honor and who has always lived up to it, no matter what it cost. "Remember, Nan, no Davenant was ever a coward in the face of difficulties. They always pulled through, somehow."

"Or ran away—like Angèle de Varincourt."

"She ran from one difficulty into a hundred others. No wrong can be righted by another wrong."

"Can any wrong ever be really righted?" she demanded bitterly.

"We have to pay for our mistakes—

each in our turn." He himself had paid to the uttermost farthing. "Is it a very heavy price, Nan?"

She turned her face away a little.

"It will be—higher than I expected," she acknowledged slowly.

"Well, then, pay up. Don't make Roger pay for your blunder. You have other things—your music, for instance. Many people have to go through life with only their work for company—whereas you are Roger's whole world."

With the New Year Lord St. John returned to town. Nan missed him every minute of the day, but she had drawn new strength and steadfastness from his kindly counsels.

CHAPTER XX.

For the first few days succeeding Lord St. John's departure from Trenby Hall, matters progressed comparatively smoothly. Then, as his influence waned with absence, the usual difficulties reappeared, the old hostilities arose once more between Nan and Lady Gertrude. Mutual understanding is impossible between two people whose sense of values is fundamentally opposed, and music, the one thing that had counted throughout Nan's life, was a matter of supreme unimportance to the older woman.

Since Sandy's stimulating visit Nan had devoted considerable time to the composition of her concerto, working at it with a recrudescence of her old enthusiasm, and the work had been good for her. Unfortunately, however, the hours she spent in the seclusion of the west parlor were not allowed to pass without comment.

"It seems to take you a long time to compose a new piece," remarked Isabel at dinner one evening, the trite expression "new piece" very evidently culled from her school-day memories.

Nan smiled across at her.

"A concerto's a pretty big undertaking, you see," she explained.

"Rather an unnecessary one, I should have thought, as you are so soon to be married." Lady Gertrude spoke with her usual acid brevity. "It certainly prevents our enjoying as much of your society as we should wish."

Nan flushed scarlet at the implied slur on her behavior as a guest in the house, even though she recognized the injustice of it. An awkward pause ensued.

"This afternoon, for instance," pursued Lady Gertrude, "Isobel and I paid several calls in the neighborhood, and in each case your absence was a disappointment to our friends—very naturally."

"I—I'm sorry," stammered Nan. She found it utterly incomprehensible that any one should expect her to break off in the middle of an afternoon's inspiration in order to pay a duty call upon absolute strangers whose disappointment was probably solely due to balked curiosity concerning Roger's future wife.

Isobel laughed lightly and let fly one of her little two-edged shafts.

"I expect you think we're a lot of very commonplace people, Nan," she commented. "Own up, now!" Her tone was challenging.

Lady Gertrude's eyes flashed like steel.

"Hardly that, I hope," she said coldly.

"Well, we're none of us in the least artistic," persisted her niece, perfectly aware that her small thrusts were as irritating to Lady Gertrude and Roger as the picador's darts to the bull in the arena. "So, of course, we must appear rather Philistine compared with Nan's set in London."

Roger leveled a keen glance at Nan. There was suppressed anger and a searching, almost fierce inquiry in his eyes beneath which she shrank. That imperious temper of his was not difficult to rouse, as she had discovered on

more than one occasion since she had come to Trenby Hall.

"Silence evidently gives consent," laughed Isobel as Nan, absorbed in her own reflections for the moment, vouchsafed no contradiction to her last remark.

Nan met the other's mocking glance defiantly. With a sudden willfulness, born of the incessant opposition she encountered, she determined to let Miss Carson's second challenge go unanswered. She had tried—tried desperately—to win the affection, even the bare liking, of Rogers' womankind, and she had failed. It was all just so much useless effort. Henceforward, they might think what they chose of her.

The remainder of the meal passed in a strained and uncomfortable manner, but it came to an end at last, and she rose from the table with a sigh of relief and accompanied the other two women out of the room, leaving Roger to smoke his pipe alone as usual. An instant later, to her surprise, she heard his footstep and found that he had followed them into the hall and was standing on the threshold of the library.

"Come in here, Nan," he said briefly.

Somewhat reluctantly she followed him into the room. He closed the door behind her, then swung round on his heel so that they stood fronting one another. At the sight of his face she recoiled a step in sheer nervous astonishment. It was a curious ashen white, and from beneath drawn brows his hawk's eyes seemed positively to blaze at her.

"Roger," she stammered, "what—what is it?"

"Is it true?" he demanded, ignoring her halting question and fixing her with a glance that seemed to penetrate right through her.

"Is—is what true?" she faltered.

"Is it true—what Isobel said—that you look down on us because we're

countrified, that you're still hankering after that precious artistic crew of yours in London?"

He spoke violently, so violently that it roused Nan's spirit. She turned away from him.

"Don't be so absurd, Roger," she said contemptuously. "Isobel was only joking. It was very silly of her, but it's sillier still for you to take any notice of what she said."

"She was *not* joking. You've shown clearly enough ever since you came here that you're dissatisfied—bored! Do you suppose I haven't seen it? I'm not blind! And I won't stand it! If your music is going to come between us, I'll smash the piano!"

"Roger! You ridiculous person!"

She was smiling now. Something in his anger reminded her of an enraged small boy, and she felt that she wanted to comfort him. She could forgive him his violence. In his furious antagonism toward the art which meant so much to her, she traced the combined influence of Lady Gertrude and Isobel. Not merely the latter's pin pricks at dinner this particular evening, but the constant pressure of criticism of which she was the subject.

"You ridiculous person! If you did smash the piano, it wouldn't make me any less a musician. And," she continued lightly, "I really can't have you being jealous of an inanimate thing like a grand piano!"

Roger's frown relaxed a little. His threat to smash the piano sounded foolish even to himself. But he hated the instrument none the less, although without precisely knowing why. Subconsciously he was aware that the real Nan still eluded him. She was his in the eyes of the world, pledged to be his wife, yet he knew that although he might possess her body it would bring him no nearer the possession of her soul and spirit. That other man—the one for whom she had once told him she

cared—held those! Trenby was not given to psychological analysis, but in a blind, bewildered fashion he felt that that thing of wood and ivory and stretched strings represented in concrete form everything that stood between himself and Nan.

"Have I nothing else—one else—to be jealous of?" he demanded. "Answer me!"

With a swift movement he gripped her by the shoulder, forcing her to face him again, his eyes still stormy. She winced involuntarily under the pressure of his fingers, but forced herself to answer him.

"You know," she said quietly. "I told you when you asked me to be your wife—that there was some one for whom I cared. But, if you believed all I told you then—you know, too, that you have no reason to be jealous."

"You mean because you can't marry him?" he asked moodily.

"Yes."

The brief reply acted like a spark to tinder. With a stifled exclamation he caught her in his arms, crushing his mouth down on hers till her lips felt bruised beneath his kisses.

"It's not enough!" he said, his voice hoarse and shaken. "It's not enough! I want you—the whole of you! Nan—Nan!"

For an instant she struggled against him, almost instinctively. Then, remembering that she had given him the right to kiss her if he chose, she yielded, surrendering passively to the fierce tide of his passion.

"Kiss me!" he insisted hotly.

She kissed him obediently, but there was no warmth in her kiss, no answering thrill, and the man knew it. He held her away from him, his sudden passion chilled.

"Is that the best you can do?" he demanded, looking down at her with something grimly ironic in his eyes. She steadied herself to meet his glance.

"It is—really, Roger," she replied earnestly. "Oh!" She flushed swiftly. "You must know it!"

"Yes," he acquiesced with a shrug. "I suppose I ought to have known it. I'm only a second string, after all."

There was so much bitterness in his voice that Nan's heart was touched to a compassionate understanding.

"Ah! Don't speak like that!" she cried tremulously. "You know I'm giving you all I can, Roger. I've been quite fair with you—quite honest. I told you I had no love to give you, that I could never care for any one again—like that. And you said you would be content," she added with reproach.

"I know I did," he answered sullenly. "But I'm not. No man who loved you would be content! And I'm never sure of you. You hate it here."

"But it will be different when we are married," she said gently. Surely it would be different when they were alone together in their own home without the perpetual irritation of Isobel's malicious little thrusts and Lady Gertrude's implacability.

"By God, yes! It'll be different then. I shall have you to *myself*!"

"Your mother?" She questioned, a thought timidly.

"She—and Isobel—will go to the dower house. No"—he seemed to read her thoughts—"they won't like it. They don't want to go. That's natural enough. Once I thought—" He checked himself abruptly, wondering how he could ever have conceived it possible that his mother might remain on at the Hall after his marriage. "But not now! I'll have my wife to myself," he declared savagely. "Nan, how long am I to wait?"

A thrill of dismay ran through her. So far, he had not raised the question as to the actual date of their marriage, and she had been thankful to leave it for settlement at some vaguely distant period.

"Why—why, I couldn't be married till Kitty comes home," she faltered.

"I suppose not. When do you expect her back?"

"About the end of the month, I think, or the beginning of February."

"Then you'll marry me in April."

He made the statement with a certain grim arrogance that forbade all contradiction. He was in a curiously uncertain mood, and Nan, anxious not to provoke another storm, assented reluctantly.

"You mean that? You won't fail me?" His keen eyes searched her face as though he doubted her and sought to wring the truth from her lips.

"Yes," she said very low, "I mean it."

He left her then and a few minutes later, when she had recovered her poise, she rejoined Lady Gertrude and Isobel in the drawing-room.

"You and Roger have been having a very long confab," remarked Isobel, looking up from the jumper she was knitting. "What does it portend?"

Her nimble fingers did not pause in their work. The soft, even click of the needles went on unbrokenly.

"Nothing immediate," answered Nan. "He wants me to settle the date of our wedding, that's all."

The clicking ceased abruptly.

"And when is it to be?" Isobel's attention seemed entirely concentrated upon a dropped stitch.

"Some time in April. It will have to depend a little on Mrs. Seymour's plans. She wants me to be married from her house, just as Penelope was."

"Do you mean from her house in town?" Lady Gertrude asked, laying down the utilitarian flannel petticoat she was making for one of her protégées in the village.

"Why, yes, I suppose so." Nan looked faintly puzzled.

"Then I hope you will rearrange matters."

Lady Gertrude's manner, though colder and infinitely more precise, was as arrogant as Roger's, with the kind of arrogance which calmly assumes that any opposition is out of the question.

"It would be the greatest disappointment to the tenantry," she continued, "if they were unable to witness the marriage of my son, as they would have done, of course, if he'd married some one of the district. So I hope that Mrs. Seymour will arrange for your wedding to take place from Mallow Court."

She picked up the flannel petticoat and recommenced work upon it as though the matter were settled.

Nan lay long awake that night. Roger's sudden gust of passion had taken her by surprise, filling her with a kind of terror of him. Never before had he shown her that side of himself, and she had somehow taken it for granted that he would not prove a demanding lover. He had been so diffident, so generous at the beginning, that she had been almost ashamed of the poor return which was all that she could make. But now she was suddenly face to face with the fact that he was going to demand far more of her than she was able to give.

She had not realized how much proximity adds fuel to love's fire. Unknown even to himself Roger's passion had been gradually rising toward flood tide. Man being by nature a contradictory animal, the attitude assumed by his mother and cousin toward the woman who was to be his wife had seemed to fan rather than smother the flame.

All at once the curb had snapped. He wanted Nan, the same Nan with whom he had fallen in love—the inconsequent, feminine thing of elusive frocks and absurd, delicious faults and weaknesses—rather than a Nan molded into shape by Lady Gertrude's iron hand. An intense resentment of his

mother's interference had been gradually growing up within him. He would do all the molding that was required—after matrimony!

Not that he put all this to himself in so many words. But a sense of revolt, an overwhelming jealousy of every one who made any claim at all on Nan, jealousy even of that merry bohemian life of hers in which he had had no share, had been slowly gathering within him until it was almost more than he could endure. Isobel's taunts at dinner had half maddened him. Whether he was Philistine or not, Nan had promised to marry him, and he would know neither rest nor peace of mind until that promise was fulfilled.

And Nan, as she lay in bed with wide eyes staring into the darkness, felt as if the door of the cage was slowly closing upon her.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was a cheerless morning. Gusts of fine, sprinkling rain drove hither and thither on a blustering wind, while overhead hung a leaden sky with patches of black cloud scudding raggedly across it.

Nan, coming slowly downstairs to breakfast, regarded the state of the weather as in keeping with everything else. The constant friction of her visit to Trenby had been taking its daily toll of her natural buoyancy, and last night's interview with Roger had tried her frayed nerves to the uttermost. This morning, after an almost sleepless night, she felt that to remain there any longer would be more than she could endure. She must get away, secure at least a few days' respite from the dreadful atmosphere of disapprobation and dislike which Lady Gertrude managed to convey.

She hesitated nervously outside the morning-room door, whence issued the soft clink of china and a murmur of

voices. The clock in the hall had struck the hour five minutes ago. She was late, and she knew that the instant she entered the room she would feel that unfriendly atmosphere rushing to meet her like a great black wave. Finally, with an effort, she turned the doorknob and went in.

For once Lady Gertrude refrained from comment upon her lack of punctuality. She seemed preoccupied and, to judge from the pinched closing of her lips, her thoughts were anything but pleasant, while Roger was in the sullen, rather impenetrable mood which Nan had learned to recognize as a sign of storm. He hardly spoke at all and, immediately breakfast was at an end, he rose from the table, remarking that he should not be in for lunch, and left the room.

"I suppose he's riding over to Berry Farm—the tenant wants some repairs done," said Lady Gertrude when he had gone. "He ought to take a few sandwiches with him if he won't be here for lunch."

Isobel jumped up from her seat.

"I'll see that he does," she said quickly, and went out of the room in search of him. Any need of Roger's must be instantly supplied.

Lady Gertrude waited until the servants had cleared away the breakfast, then she turned to Nan with a very definite air of having something to say.

"Have you and Roger quarreled?" she asked abruptly.

The girl started nervously. She had not expected this as a consequence of Roger's taciturnity.

"No," she said, stumbling a little, "no, we haven't—quarreled."

Lady Gertrude scrutinized her with keen, light-gray eyes that had the same penetrating glance as Roger's own, and Nan felt herself coloring.

"You've displeased him in some way or other," insisted Lady Gertrude, and waited for a reply.

Nan flared up at the older woman's arbitrary manner.

"That's rather a funny way to put it, isn't it?" she said quickly. "I'm—I'm not a child, you know."

"You behave very much like one at times," retorted Lady Gertrude. "I've done my utmost since you came here to fit you to be Roger's wife, and without any appreciable result. You seem to be exactly as irresponsible and thoughtless now as you were when you arrived."

The cold, contemptuous criticism flicked the girl's raw nerves like the point of a lash. She sprang to her feet, her eyes very bright, as though tears were not far distant, her young breast rising and falling unevenly with her hurrying breath.

"Is that what you think of me?" she said unsteadily. "Because then I'd better go away. It's what I want—to go away! I—I can't bear it here any longer." Her fingers gripped the edge of the table tensely. "I know you don't want me to be Roger's wife; you don't think I'm fit for it! You've just said so! And—and you've let me see it every day. I'll go—I'll go!"

Lady Gertrude's face remained quite unchanged. Only the steely gleam in her eyes hardened.

"When this hysterical outburst is quite over," she said scathingly, "I shall be better able to talk to you."

Nan made no answer. It was all she could do to prevent herself from bursting into tears.

"Sit down again." Lady Gertrude pointed to a chair, and Nan, who felt her legs trembling under her, sat down obediently. "You're quite mistaken in thinking I don't wish you to be Roger's wife," continued Lady Gertrude quietly. "I do wish it."

Nan glanced across at her in astonishment. This was the last thing she had expected her to say—irreconcilable

with her whole attitude throughout the last two months.

"I wish it," she pursued, "because Roger wishes it. I should like my son to have everything he wants. To be perfectly frank, I don't consider he has made a very suitable choice, but since he wants you—why, he must have you. No, don't interrupt me, please," she said for Nan, quivering with indignation, was about to protest. "When—if ever you are a mother you will understand my point of view. Roger has made his choice, and of course he hasn't the least idea how unsuitable a one it is. Men rarely get beyond a pretty face. So it devolves upon me to make you better fitted to be his wife than you are at present. You understand?"

The cold, dispassionate speech roused Nan to a fury of exasperation and revolt. Evidently, in Lady Gertrude's mind, Roger was the only person who mattered. She herself was of the utmost unimportance except for the fact that he wanted her for his wife! She felt as if she were a slave who had been bartered away to a new owner.

"Yes, I do understand!" she exclaimed in a voice which she hardly recognized as her own. "And I think everything you've said is horrible! If I thought Roger looked at things like that, I'd break our engagement to-morrow! But he doesn't! I know he doesn't. It's only you who think such hateful things. And—I won't stay here! I—*I can't!*"

"It's foolish to talk of breaking off your engagement," returned Lady Gertrude composedly. "Roger is not a man to be picked up and put down at any woman's whim—as you would find out if you tried to do it."

Inwardly Nan felt bitterly conscious that this was true. She didn't believe for a moment that Roger would release her, however much she might im-

plore him to. And unless he himself released her, her pledge to him must stand.

"As to going away"—Lady Gertrude rose as she spoke—"you can put any idea of rushing off to London—that's where you want to go, I suppose—out of your head. It would hardly be proper for a young, unmarried girl to stay there alone. Even if Roger were agreeable, I should not allow it while you are in my charge. Neither is it exactly complimentary to us that you should even suggest leaving Trenby." With this parting comment she left the room.

When she had gone Nan stared stonily out of the window. She felt hopeless, helpless to withstand the thin, steel-eyed woman who was Roger's mother. Nominally free, she was to all intents and purposes a prisoner at Trenby Hall until Kitty or Penelope came home. Of course, she could run away, but the knowledge of Lord St. John's disappointment if she did that made her banish the thought.

"No Davenant was ever a coward in the face of difficulties," he had told her. And she loved him far too much to hurt him as grievously as she knew it would hurt him if she ran away from them.

She stood there for a long time, staring dumbly out at the falling rain and dripping trees. She was thinking along the lines which St. John had laid down for her. "Don't make Roger pay for your own blunder." Had she been doing that? Remembering all that had passed between them last night she began to realize that this was just what she had been doing.

She had no love to give him, but she had been keeping him out of everything else as well. She had not even tried to make a comrade of him, to let him into her interests and to try and share his own. Instead, she had shut herself

away in the west parlor with her music and her memories, and in his own blundering fashion Roger had realized it. Probably he had even guessed that that other man who had loved her had been able to go with her into the temple of music, comprehending it all and loving it even as she did.

She understood Roger's strange and sudden jealousy now. Although she was to be his wife, he was jealous of those invisible bonds of mutual understanding which had linked her to Peter Mallory—bonds which, had they been free to marry, would have made of their marriage a perfect thing, the beautiful mating of spirit, soul, and body.

The doors of her soul, that innermost sanctuary of all, would never be opened for any other to enter in. But surely there was something more that she might give Roger than she had yet given. She could stretch out a friendly hand and try to link their interests together, however slight the link might be.

All at once, a plan to accomplish this formulated itself in her mind. He had wanted to "smash the piano." Well, he should never want that again. She would show him that her music was not going to stand between them—that she was willing to share it with him. She would talk to him about it, get him to understand something of what it meant to her, and when the concerto was quite finished, she would invite him into the west parlor to listen to it. It was nearing completion—another week's work and it would be finished. Of course, Roger wouldn't be able to give her a musician's understanding of it, but he would certainly appreciate the fact that she had played it to him first of all.

It would go far to heal that resentful jealousy if she "shared" the concerto with him. He would never again feel that she was keeping him outside the real interests of her life. Probably,

later on, when it was performed by a big London orchestra, Roger would even begin to take a quaint kind of pride in her musical achievements.

What she purposed would involve a good deal of pluck and sacrifice, but if by this road she and Roger took one step toward a better understanding, toward that comradeship which was all that she could ever give him, then it would have been worth the sacrifice.

Gradually the stony look of despair lifted from her face, and a new spirit of resolution took possession of her. She was not the only person in the world who had to suffer. There were others, Peter among them, who were debarred by circumstances from finding happiness, and who went on doing their duty unflinchingly. It was only she who had failed—letting Roger bear the cost of her mistake. She had promised to marry him when it seemed the only way out of the difficulties which beset her, and now she was not honoring that promise. While Peter Mallory was still waiting quietly for the wife he no longer loved to come back to him, keeping the door of his house open to her whenever she should choose to claim the fulfillment of the pledges he had made the day he married her.

Nan leaned her head against the windowpane, realizing that, whatever Roger's faults might be, she, too, had fallen short.

"Our troth, Nan. Hang on to it—hard, when life seems a bit more uphill than usual."

She could hear Peter's voice, steady and clear and reassuring, almost as she had heard it that night on the headland at Tintagel. She felt her throat contract, and a burning mist of tears blurred her vision. For a moment she fought desperately against her weakness. Then, with a little strangled cry, she buried her face against her arm and broke into a passion of tears.

CHAPTER XXII.

The concerto was finished! Finished, at least, as far as it was possible without rehearsing the effect with orchestra, and, as Nan turned over the sheets of manuscript, she was conscious of that glorious thrill of accomplishment which is the creative artist's recompense for long hours of work and sacrifice, and for those black moments of discouragement and self-distrust which no true artist can escape.

She sat very quietly in the west parlor, thinking of the concerto and of what she meant to do with it. She was longing to show it to Sandy McBain, who would have a musician's comprehension of every bar, and she knew he would rejoice with her whole-heartedly over it. But that would have to wait until after Roger had heard it. The first fruits, as it were, must be offered to him.

It was not until after dinner that she mentioned the concerto to him, snatching an opportunity when they chanced to find themselves alone for a few minutes. A distracted young woman from the village had called to ask Lady Gertrude's advice as to how she should deal with a husband who seemed to find his chief entertainment in life in beating her with a broomstick and in threatening to "do her in" altogether, if the application of the broomstick proved barren of wifely improvement. Accordingly, Lady Gertrude and her aid-de-camp, Isobel, were closeted with the terrified creature, leaving Nan and Roger alone.

"It's good, Roger," said Nan, when she had told him that the concerto was finished. "It's really good. And I want you to hear it first of any one."

Roger smiled down at her. He was obviously pleased.

"Of course, I must hear it first," he answered. "I'm your lawful lord and master, remember."

"Not yet," she objected hastily.

He threw his arm round her and pulled her into his embrace.

"No. But very soon," he said.

"You won't beat me, I suppose, like Mrs. Pike's husband?" she suggested teasingly. Mrs. Pike was the woman from the village.

His arm tightened around her possessively.

"I don't know," he said slowly. "I might—if I couldn't manage you any other way."

"Roger!"

There was almost a note of fear in her quick, astonished exclamation. With his arm gripped round her she realized how utterly powerless she would be against his immense strength, and something flintlike and merciless in the expression of the piercing eyes which were blazing down at her made her feel, with a sudden catch at her heart, as though he might actually do the thing he said.

"I hope it won't come to beating you," he resumed in a lighter tone of voice. "But," he added grimly, "not even you, when you're my wife, shall defy me with impunity."

Nan drew herself out of his arms.

"Well, I'm not your wife yet," she said, trying to laugh away the queer, unexpected tensing of the moment. "Only a very hard-working young woman who has a concerto to play to you."

He frowned a little.

"There's no need for you to work hard. I'd rather you didn't. I want you just to enjoy life, have a good time, and keep your music as a relaxation."

Her face clouded over.

"Oh, Roger, you don't understand! I must do it. I couldn't live without it. It fills my life."

His expression softened. He reached out his arm again and drew her back to his side, but this time with a strange, unwonted tenderness.

"I suppose it does," he conceded. "But some day, darling, after we're married, I hope there'll be something—*some one*—else to fill your life. And when that time comes, why, the music will take second place."

Nan flushed scarlet and wriggled irritably in his embrace.

"Oh, Roger, do try to understand! As if—having a child—would make any difference. A baby's a baby, and music's music. The one can't take the place of the other."

Roger looked a trifle taken aback. He held old-fashioned views and rather thought that all women regarded motherhood as a duty and privilege of existence. And, inside himself, he had never doubted that if this great happiness were ever granted to Nan, she would lose all those funny, unaccountable ways of hers, which alternately bewildered and annoyed him, and turn into a nice, normal woman, like ninety-nine per cent of the other women of his somewhat limited acquaintance. So he was quite genuinely dumfounded at her heterodox pronouncement on the relative values of music and babies.

A baby was not in the least an object of absorbing interest to Nan. It cried out of tune and made ear-piercing noises that were not included in even the most modern of compositions. Moreover, she was not, by nature, the maternal type of woman, to whom marriage is but the beautiful path which leads to motherhood. She was essentially one of the lovers of the world. Had she married her mate, she would have demanded nothing more of life, though if a child had been born of such mating, it would have seemed to her so beautiful and sure a link, so blended with love itself, that her arms would have opened to receive it.

"That's all nonsense, you know, sweetheart," chided Roger, who was sublimely ignorant of these intricacies of the feminine heart and mind. "And

some day when there's a small son to be thought about and planned for and loved, you'll find that what I say is true."

"It might chance to be a small daughter," suggested Nan snubbily, and Roger's face fell a little. "So, meanwhile, as I haven't a baby and I *have* a concerto, come along and listen to it."

He nodded and followed her into the west parlor. A cheerful fire was blazing on the hearth, a big lounge chair drawn up invitingly beside it, while close at hand stood a small table with pipe, tobacco pouch, and matches lying on it in readiness.

Roger smiled at the careful arrangement.

"What a thoughtful child it's becoming!" he commented, taking up his pipe.

"Well, you can listen to music much better if you're really comfy," said Nan. "Sit down and light your pipe—there, I'll light it for you when you've finished squashing the 'baccy down into it."

Roger dropped leisurely into the big chair, filled and lit his pipe, and, when it was drawing well, stretched out his legs to the logs' warm glow with a sigh of contentment.

"Now, fire away, sweetheart," he said. "I'm all attention."

She looked across at him, feeling for the first time a little anxious, and uncertain of the success of her plan.

"Of course, it'll sound very bad—just played on the piano," she explained carefully. "You'll have to try and imagine the difference the orchestral part makes."

Switching off the lights, so that nothing but the flickering glow of the fire illumined the room, she began to play.

For half an hour she played on, lost to all thoughts of the world around her, wrapped in the melody and meaning of the music. Then, as the *finale* rushed in a torrent of golden chords to its climax and the last note was struck, her

hands fell away from the piano and she sank back on her seat with a little sigh of exhaustion and happiness.

A pause followed. In silence she awaited Roger's approval, her lips just parted, her face still alight with the joy of the creator who knows that his work is good.

But the words for which she was listening did not come. Instead—utter silence! Wondering, half apprehensive of she knew not what, Nan twisted round on the music seat and looked at Roger. The sharp, quick intake of her breath broke the silence as might a cry. Roger was sleeping peacefully, his head thrown back against a cushion!

Nan rose slowly and, coming forward into the circle of the firelight, stared down at him incredulously. It was unbelievable! She had been giving him all the best that was in her—the work of her brain, the interpretation of her hands—baring her very heart to him during the last half hour. And he had slept through it all!

In any other circumstances, probably, the humorous side of the matter would have struck her, and the sting and smart of it been washed away in laughter.

But just now it was impossible for her to feel anything except bitterness and hopeless disappointment. For weeks she had been working hard, without the fillip of congenial atmosphere, in spite of depression and discouragement, and now she was strung up to a high pitch.

She had counted so intensely on winning Roger's sympathy and understanding, on putting an end to that blundering, terrible jealousy of his by playing the game to the limit of her ability. It had been like making a burnt offering for her to share the thing she loved best with Roger, to let him into some of the secret places where dwelt her inmost dreams and emotions. And she had nerved herself to do it, made her sacri-

fice—in vain! Roger was even unconscious that it was a sacrifice!

She looked down at him as he lay with the firelight flickering across his strong-featured face, and a storm of fury and indignation swept over her. She could have struck him!

Presently he stirred uneasily. Perhaps he felt the cessation of the music, the presence of some one moving in the room. A moment later he opened his eyes and saw her standing beside him.

"You, darling?" he murmured drowsily. He stretched his arms. "I think I've been asleep. By Jove!" he exclaimed as recollection returned to him. "You were playing to me!"

"Yes," she answered slowly. Her lips felt dry. "And I'll never play to you again as long as I live!"

He smiled indulgently.

"That's putting it rather strong, isn't it?" he said, pulling her down to his knee.

She sprang up again instantly and stood a little away from him, her hands clenched, her breast heaving tumultuously.

"Come back, little firebrand!" he commanded laughingly.

A fresh gust of indignation swept over her. Even now he didn't comprehend, didn't realize in the very least how he had wounded her. Her nails dug into the flesh of her palms as she took a fresh grip of herself and answered him very slowly and distinctly so that he might not miss her meaning.

"It's not putting it one bit too strong. It's what I feel—that I can't ever play to you again." She paused, then burst out impetuously: "You've always disliked my love of music! You were jealous of it. And to-night I wanted to show you, to—to share it with you. You hated the piano. You wanted to smash it, because you thought it came between us. And so I tried to make you understand!" Her words came

rushing out headlong now, bitter, sobbing words, holding all the agony of mind which she had been enduring for so long.

"You've no idea what music means to me—and you've not tried to find out. Instead, you've laughed indulgently about it, been impatient over it, and behaved as though it were some child's toy of which you didn't quite approve." Her voice shook. "And it isn't! It's *part* of me—part of the woman you want to marry." She broke off, a little breathlessly.

Roger was on his feet now and there was a deep, smoldering anger in his eyes as he regarded her.

"And 'is all this outburst because I fell asleep while you were playing?" he asked curtly.

She was silent, battling with the emotion that was shaking her.

"Because," he went on with a tinge of contempt in his voice, "if so, it's a ridiculous storm in a teacup."

"*'Ridiculous!'* Yes, that's all it would be to you," she answered bitterly. "But to me it's just like a light flashed on our future life together. We're miles apart—miles! We haven't a thought, an idea, in common. And when it comes to music, to the one big thing in my life, you brush it aside as if it could be taken up or put down like a child's musical box!"

Roger looked at her. Something of her passionate pain and resentment was becoming clear to him.

"I didn't know it meant as much to you as that," he said slowly.

"It's everything to me now!" she burst out wildly. "The only thing I have left—left of my world as I knew it."

His face whitened, and a curious, strained brilliance came into his eyes. She had touched him on the raw, roused his mad jealousy of all that had been in her life of which he had no share.

"The only thing you have left?" he

repeated, with a slow, dangerous inflection in his voice. "Do you mean that?"

"Yes!" she exclaimed, smiting her hands together. "Can't you see it? There's nothing here for me. Are we companions—you and I? We're absolute strangers! We don't think, or feel, or move in the same world."

"No?"

Just the brief monosyllable, spoken as coolly as though she had remarked that she didn't like the color of his tie.

She looked up, bewildered, and met his gaze. His eyes frightened her. They were ablaze, remorseless as the eyes of a bird of prey. A sudden terror of him overwhelmed her.

"Roger!" she cried. "We can't marry! Let me go—release me from my promise! Oh, I can't bear it! I can't marry you! Let me go! Oh, please let me go!"

There was a pause, a pause during which Nan could feel her heart leaping in her body like some terrified, captive thing. Then Roger made a movement. Instinctively she knew it was toward her and flung out her arms to ward him off. But she might as well have opposed him with two straws. He caught both wrists in one of his big hands and bent her arms downward, drawing her close to him till she lay unwillingly against his breast, held there in a grasp like iron.

"Will I release you?" he said savagely. "No, I will *not*! Neither now, nor at any future time. You're mine! Do you understand what that means? It means if you'd one day left to live, it would be *my* day—one night, *mine*! And I swear to you if any man takes you from me I'll kill him first and you after. *Now* do you understand?"

She tried to speak, but her voice failed her. It was as though he had pronounced sentence on her—a life sentence. She could never get away from him—never, never! A shudder ran through her whole body. He felt it,

and it stung him to fresh anger. Her head was pressed against his shoulder as if for shelter.

"Look up!" he demanded imperiously. "Don't hide your face. It's mine. And I want to see it!"

Reluctantly, compelled by his voice, she lifted a white, tortured face to his. Then, meeting his eyes, savagely alight with the fire of conquest, she turned her head quickly aside. But it was useless. She was powerless in the vise-like grip of his arms, and the next moment he was kissing her eyes and mouth and pulsing throat, with terrible, burning kisses that seemed to sear their way through her whole body, branding her indelibly his.

It was useless to struggle. She hung nervelessly in his straining arms, mute and helpless to withstand him, while his passion swept over her like a tidal wave, submerging her utterly.

When at last he set her free she swayed unsteadily, catching at the table for support. She was voiceless, breathless from his violence. The tide had receded, leaving her utterly spent and exhausted.

He regarded her in silence for a moment.

"I don't think you'll ask me to release you from your engagement again," he said slowly.

"No," she whispered tonelessly. "No."

She tottered almost as if she were going to fall. With a sort of rough kindness he put out his hand to steady her, but she shrank from him like a beaten child.

"Don't do that!" he exclaimed unevenly, and added: "I've frightened you, I suppose?"

She bent her head.

"Well," he continued sulkily, "it was your own fault. You roused the wild beast in me." Then, with a queer, half-ashamed laugh, he added: "There's Spanish blood in the Trenbys, you

know, as there is in many of the Cornish folk."

Nan supposed this avowal was intended as an apology, or at least as an explanation of sorts. It was rather appealing in its boyish clumsiness, but she felt too numb, too utterly weary, to respond to it.

"You're tired," he said abruptly. "You'd better go to bed." He put a hand beneath her arm, but she shrank away from him with a fresh spasm of terror.

"Don't be afraid. I'm not going to kiss you again." He spoke reassuringly. "Come, let me help you. You can hardly stand."

Once more he took her arm and, too stunned to offer any resistance, she allowed him to lead her from the room.

"Will you be all right now?" he asked anxiously, as they paused at the foot of the staircase.

She gripped the banister.

"Yes," she answered mechanically. "I shall be all right."

He remained at the bottom of the stairs, watching until her slight figure had disappeared round the bend of the stairway.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Your Great-aunt Rachel is dead, Roger."

Lady Gertrude made this announcement the following morning at breakfast. No one made any reply unless a sympathetic murmur from Isobel could be construed as such.

"Cousin Emily writes that the funeral is to take place next Thursday," pursued Lady Gertrude, referring to a letter which she held. "We shall have to attend it, of course."

"Must we?" asked Roger, with obvious lack of enthusiasm. "I haven't seen her for at least five years."

"I know." The reply came so sharply that it was evident he had touched upon a sore subject. "It is

very much to be regretted that you haven't. After all, she must have left at least a hundred thousand to divide."

"Even the prospect of a share of the spoil wouldn't have compensated for the infliction of visiting an old termagant like Great-aunt Rachel," averred Roger unrepentantly.

"I shall be interested to hear the will read, nevertheless," rejoined Lady Gertrude. "After all, you were her only great-nephew and, in spite of your inattentiveness, I don't suppose she has overlooked you. She may even have remembered Isobel to the extent of a piece of jewelry."

Isobel's brown eyes gleamed like the alert eyes of a robin who suddenly perceives the crumbs some kindly hand has scattered on the lawn.

"I'm afraid we shall have to leave you alone for a night, Nan," pursued Lady Gertrude with a stiff air of apology.

Nan, engrossed in a long epistle from Penelope, did not hear her and made no answer. It was little wonder that she was so much absorbed; Penelope's letter had been written on board ship and posted from Liverpool, and it contained the joyful tidings that she and her husband had returned to England and proposed going straight to the Edenhall flat.

"You must come up and see us as soon as your visit to Trenby comes to an end," wrote Penelope, and Nan devoutly wished it could end that very moment.

"I don't think you heard me, Nan," Lady Gertrude's incisive voice cut sharply across the pulsing excitement of the girl's thoughts.

"I—I—no. Did you speak to me?" she faltered. Her usual dainty assurance was fast disappearing beneath the nervous strain of living with Lady Gertrude.

The facts concerning the great-aunt's death were recapitulated for her bene-

fit, together with the explanation that, since Lady Gertrude, Roger, and Isobel would be obliged to stay the night with "Cousin Emily" in order to attend the funeral, Nan would be reluctantly left to her own devices.

"I can't very well take you with us on such an occasion," meditated Lady Gertrude aloud. "Would you care to have me ask some one over to keep you company while we're away?"

"Oh, no, thank you," replied Nan hastily. "Please don't worry about me at all, Lady Gertrude. I don't in the least mind being left alone—really."

"Well, I regret the necessity of leaving you," said Lady Gertrude, meticulous as ever in matters of social observance. "But the servants will look after you well, I hope. And, in any case, we shall be home again on Thursday night. We shall be able to catch the last train back."

During the days which intervened before the family exodus, Nan could hardly contain her impatience. Their absence would give her the longed-for opportunity to get away from Trenby! The idea had flashed into her mind the instant Lady Gertrude had informed her she would be left alone there, and now each hour that must elapse before she could carry out her plan seemed an eternity.

Following the prolonged strain of the preceding three months, that last terrible scene with Roger had snapped her endurance. She could not look back upon it without shuddering. Since the day of its occurrence she had hardly spoken to him, except at mealtimes when, as if by mutual consent, they both conversed as though nothing had happened—for Lady Gertrude's benefit. Apart from this, Nan avoided him as much as possible, treating him with a cool, indifferent reserve he found difficult to break down. At least, he made no very determined effort to do so. Perhaps he was even a little ashamed of

himself. But it was not in his nature to own himself wrong.

Nan felt that she had made her effort—and failed. Roger had missed the whole meaning of her attempt to bring about a mutual feeling of good comradeship, brushed it aside as of no importance. And instead, he had substituted his own imperious demands, rousing her, once the stress of the actual interview itself was past, to fierce and bitter revolt. No matter what happened in the future, she must get away now, snatch a brief respite from the daily strain of her life at the Hall.

But, with an oddly persistent determination, she put away from her all thought of breaking her engagement. To most women similarly situated this would have been the obvious and simplest solution of the problem. But it seemed to Nan that her compact with Roger demanded a finer interpretation of the word honor than would have been necessary in the case of an engagement entered into under different circumstances. The personal emergency which had driven her into giving Roger her promise weighed heavily upon her, and she felt that nothing less than his own consent would entitle her to break her pledge to him.

Added to this, Roger's sheer, dominant virility had imbued her with a fatalistic sense of her total inability to escape him. She had had a glimpse of the primitive man in him—of the man with the club. Even if she were to violate her conscience sufficiently to end the engagement between them, she knew perfectly well that he would refuse to accept or acknowledge any such termination. Wherever she hid herself he would find out her hiding place and come in search of her, and insist upon the fulfillment of her promise. And supposing that, in desperation, she married some one else, what was it he had said? "I swear to you if any man takes

you from me I'll kill him first and you after!"

No, there was no escape for her. Roger would dog her footsteps round the world and back again sooner than let her go free of him. In a vaguely aloof and apathetic manner she felt as if it was her destiny to marry him. Life had shown her many beautiful things—even that rarest thing of all, a beautiful and unselfish love. But it had shown them only to snatch them away again when she had learned to value them.

If only she had never met Peter, never known the secret wonder and glory, the swift, sudden strength, the exquisite mingling of passion and selflessness which go to the making of the highest in love, she might have been content to become Roger's wife and bear his children.

Wearily she faced the situation for the hundredth time and knew that in the long run she must abide by it. She had learned not to cry for the moon any longer. She wanted nothing now, either in this world or the next, except the love that was denied her.

Her thoughts went back to the day when she and Peter had first met and driven together through the twilight countryside to Abbencombe. She remembered the sudden sadness which had fallen upon him and how she had tried to cheer him by repeating the verses of a little song. It all seemed very long ago.

But sometimes God on his great white throne
Looks down from the heaven above,
And lays in the hands that are empty
The tremulous star of love.

The words seemed to speak themselves in her brain just as she herself had spoken them that day, with the car slipping swiftly through the winter dusk. She could feel again the throb of the engine—see Peter's whimsical, gray-blue eyes darken suddenly to a stern and tragic gravity.

For him and for her there could be no star. To the end of life they two must go empty-handed.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The big limousine was already at the door when Lady Gertrude and Isobel, clothed from head to foot in somber black, descended from their respective rooms. Roger, also clad in the same funereal hue, wearing a black tie—and looking as if his garments afforded him the acme of mental discomfort—stood waiting for them, with Nan, in the hall.

Lady Gertrude bestowed one of her chilly kisses upon her son's fiancée and stepped into the car. Isobel followed, and Roger brought up the rear. A minute later the car and its black-garbed occupants disappeared down the drive.

Nan turned back into the house, stretched her arms luxuriously above her head and exhaled a long sigh of relief. Then she fled down the long hall to the telephone stand, lifted the receiver. Her imperative summons was answered with a most unusual promptness by the exchange.

"Trunks, please!" she demanded and gave the number of the Edenhall flat; then prepared to possess her soul in patience till her call came through.

It was while she was at lunch that Morton, entering quietly, announced:

"You are wanted on the telephone, miss." She hardly waited to hear the end of the sentence, but flew past him.

"Hello! Hello! That you, Penny? Yes, of *course* it's Nan! Oh, my dear, I'm so glad you're back! Listen. I want to run up to town for a few days. Yes. Roger's away. They're all away. You can put me up? To-morrow? Thanks, awfully, Penny. Yes, Waterloo. At four-sixteen. Good-by."

She hung up the receiver and, returning to the dining room, made a pretense of finishing her lunch. Afterward, with as much composure as she could muster,

she informed Morton that she had been called away suddenly to London and would require the car early the next morning to take her to the station. Whatever curiosity Morton may have felt concerning this unexpected announcement, he concealed admirably.

"Very good, miss," he replied with his usual imperturbability.

"I'm leaving a letter for Mr. Trenby—to explain. See that he has it as soon as he gets back to-morrow."

And once again Morton answered respectfully:

"Very good, miss."

The writing of the letter did not occupy much time. Nan reflected that she must take one of two courses. Either she must write him at length, explaining everything—or she must leave a brief note merely stating that she had gone away. She decided on the latter and after several abortive attempts, attempts which found their ultimate fate in the fire, she achieved the following telegraphic epistle:

DEAR ROGER: Have gone to town. Stopping with Penelope. NAN.

Afterward she packed with gleeful hands. It seemed too good to be true that in twenty-four hours she would actually find herself back in London, away from this gloomy, tree-girdled house, away from Lady Gertrude's scathing tongue and Isobel's two-edged speeches, and above all, secure for a time from Roger's tumultuous lovemaking and his unuttered demand for so much more than she could ever give him.

"You blessed child! I *am* glad to see you!"

Penelope, looking the happiest and most blooming of youthful matrons, was on the platform when the Cornish express steamed into Waterloo station and Nan alighted from it.

"You can't—you can't possibly be as glad as I am, Penny mine," returned

Nan. "Hmf!" She wrinkled up her nose. "How nice London smells!"

Penelope burst out laughing.

"I mean it. You've no idea how good that smoky, petroly smell is after the innocuous breezes of the country. It's full of gorgeous suggestions of cars and people and theaters and—*and life!*"

They hurried to the other end of the platform where the porters were disinterring the luggage from the van and dumping it down on the platform. Nan's attendant porter quickly extricated her baggage from the motley pile, and very soon she and Penelope were speeding away from the station as fast as their chauffeur could take them.

"How nice and familiar it all looks," said Nan, as the car grunted up the Haymarket. "And it's heavenly to be going back to the dear old flat. Whereabouts are you looking for a house, by the way?"

"Somewhere in Hampstead, we think, where the air—and the rents—are more salubrious than nearer in."

"Of course." Nan nodded. "All singers live at Hampstead. You'd be quite unfashionable if you didn't. I suppose you and Ralph are frightfully busy?"

"Yes. But we're free to-night, luckily. So we can yarn to our hearts' content. To-morrow evening we're both singing at Albert Hall. And, oh, in the afternoon we're going to tea at Maryon's studio. His new picture's on view—private, of course."

"What new picture?"

"His portrait of the famous American beauty, Mrs. T. van Deeken. I believe she paid a fabulous sum for it; Maryon's all the rage now, you know. So he asked us to come down and see it before it's shipped off to New York. By the way, he inquired after you in his letter—I've got it with me somewhere. Oh, yes, here it is! He says:

"What-news have you of Nan? I've lost sight of her since her engagement. But now

it seems likely I shall be seeing her again before any of you."

"I can't think what he means."

"Nor I," said Nan, somewhat mystified. "But anyway," she added, smiling, "he will be seeing me even sooner than he anticipates. How has his marriage turned out?"

"Very much as one might have expected. They live most amicably—apart!" Penelope answered.

"They've surely not quarreled already?"

"Oh, no, they haven't quarreled. But, of course, they didn't fit into each other's scheme of life one bit, and they've rearranged matters to suit their own convenience. She's in the south of France just now, and when she comes to town they'll meet quite happily and visit at each other's houses. She has a palatial sort of place in Mayfair, you know, while Maryon has a duck of a house in Westminster."

"How very modern!" commented Nan, smiling. "And—how like Maryon!"

"Just like him, isn't it? And," Penelope continued dryly, "it was just like him, too, to see that the marriage settlement arrangements were all quite water-tight. However, on the whole, it's a fair bargain between them. She rejoices in the honor and glory of being a well-known artist's wife, while he has rather more money."

Ralph was on the steps of the Mansions to welcome them, and the lift conveyed them up to the flat.

"You're in your old room," Penelope told her, and Nan crowed, delighted.

Dinner was a delightful meal, full of familiar gossip and the news of old friends and fervent discussions on matters musical and artistic. When it was over, the three drew cozily together round the fire in Ralph's den. Nan sank into her chair with a blissful sigh.

"Isn't this nice?" she exclaimed. Inwardly she was reflecting that at just

about this time Roger, with Lady Gertrude and Isobel, would be returning from Great-aunt Rachel's funeral only to learn of her own flight from Trenby Hall.

"Yes," agreed Penelope. "It really was angelic of Roger to spare you at a moment's notice."

"You dear innocent!" Nan smiled grimly. "Roger didn't know I was coming."

"What!"

"No, I just thought I'd come—and he—they were all away—and I came! I left a note behind, telling him I was going to stay with you."

"Roger didn't know you were coming!" repeated Penelope. "Nan, have you had a quarrel?" she demanded.

"Yes," Nan answered shortly.

"And you came straight off here? Oh, Nan, what a fool's trick! He will be furious!"

Once or twice Penelope had caught a glimpse of that hot-headed temper which lay hidden beneath Roger's somewhat blunt exterior.

"Lady Gertrude will be furious," murmured Nan reminiscently.

"I think she'll have the right to be," answered Penelope, with quiet rebuke in her tones. "It really was abominable of you to run away like that."

Nan shrugged her shoulders, and Ralph looked across at her, smiling.

"You're a very exasperating young person, Nan," he said. "If you were going to be my wife, I believe I should beat you."

"Well, that would at least break the monotony of things," she retorted.

"Is it monotony you're suffering from?" asked Ralph quickly.

"I'm fed up with the country and its green fields—never anything but green fields! They're so eternally, *damnably* green! I just yearned for London. So I came," she answered.

The next morning, much to Nan's surprise, brought neither letter nor telegram from Roger.

"I quite expected a wire! 'Return at once. All will be forgiven,'" she said frivolously at lunch time.

"Perhaps he isn't prepared to forgive you," suggested Ralph.

Nan stared at him without answering, her eyes dilating curiously. She had never even dreamed of such a possibility, and a sudden, wild hope flamed up within her.

"It's rather a knock to a man's pride, you know, if the girl he's engaged to bolts the moment his back is turned," pursued Ralph.

"It was madness!" said Penelope.

Nan remained silent. Neither their praise nor blame affected her one iota at the moment. All that mattered was whether, without in the least intending to do it, she had cut the cords which bound her so irrevocably. Was it conceivable that Roger's pride would be so stung by her action in running away from Trenby Hall during his absence that he would never wish to see her again—far less make her his wife?

She had never contemplated the matter from that angle. But now, as Ralph put it before her, she realized that the attitude he indicated might reasonably be that of most men in similar circumstances.

Her heart beat deliriously at the very thought. If release came this way—by Roger's own decision—she would be free to take it! The price of the blunder she had made when she pledged herself to him—a price which was so much heavier than she could possibly have imagined—would be remitted.

And from the depths of her soul a fervent, disjointed prayer went up to Heaven:

"God, God, please don't let him forgive me—don't let him ever forgive me!"



The Logic of the Lost

By Austin Wade

Author of "Poor Man!"

THE best girl friend ceased speaking abruptly. She was not receiving the attention due her in consideration of the fact that she was about to impart news of great interest. She had worked up to her climax cleverly, too; with a nice regard for suspense.

But Ruth was not listening. She showed all the irritating abstraction of a newly engaged girl.

The best girl friend was *not* engaged.

However, there was still the climax, so the monologue was resumed.

"And Lali Barnes was there, too. You've read about the Barnes divorce case, of course. They say Morley Barnes has a pretty complete case, though she's already started a counter-suit. Really, Ruth, you might listen to what I'm saying!"

Ruth sat with her feet curled beneath her on the comfortable couch in the living room of her home on Park Avenue. She was very young and, with her fair, bobbed hair and her dark eyes, she looked the flapper, though her intelligence was considerably above the average.

Ruth smiled good-naturedly at her visitor.

"All right, my dear. I'm listening. But I'm free to admit those divorce cases bore me stiff. Unless, of course, I happen to know the people."

At last the best girl friend came to the point of her visit; not without re-

luctance, for the preliminaries had been amusing in spite of Ruth's lack of interest. She moistened her red lips.

"But, my dear, who do you suppose Lali Barnes was having dinner with?"

"I'm bad at puzzles," answered Ruth somewhat impatiently. "Tell me and get it over with. Somebody we know awfully well, I suppose."

"She was with Ned Grey!" the best girl friend exclaimed, watching Ruth expectantly.

The cat was out of the bag at last. Nothing travels as fast as the news of the dereliction of a brand-new fiancé.

Ruth's voice was cold when she spoke finally, but her anger was kept well under control.

"There is nothing very outrageous about what you've just told me," she said slowly, as if choosing her words, "except the fact that you, my best friend, should be the one to tell it to me. At any rate, if there should happen to be any truth in your tale, I don't want you around here ready to hand out your pity by the spoonful—like soothing sirup."

The best girl friend was speechless with surprise. She had conjured up a stimulating picture of Ruth—poor, deceived Ruth!—weeping on her shoulder; asking for comfort and advice, and now she was cheated of her rôle of comforter. Her day was utterly ruined! In a dignified manner she rose to go.

"I must say, Ruth, that you have

adopted a very strange attitude. After all, wouldn't you rather have me break it to you than some person you hardly know?"

"Some person I hardly know," mimicked Ruth, "wouldn't break it to me. They'd simply tell me in a perfectly straightforward manner."

The other girl shrugged.

"Very well, it's as you wish, of course." Then she added eagerly, as if unable to curb her curiosity: "You'll break the engagement, I suppose?"

"Not necessarily," said Ruth coolly. "But you've made yourself quite disagreeable enough for one day, Helen. Besides, I have to dress for dinner. Ned and I are going to Mont Martre."

Indolently Helen slid into her gray squirrel coat. She drew on her gloves without unnecessary haste and departed, outwardly cool, inwardly raging.

After she had gone Ruth sat quietly thinking over the situation. In the first place her engagement had been out of the ordinary. She and her fiancé misunderstood each other completely and each had become thoroughly engrossed in solving the mystery of the other's character, a form of mental gymnastics long popular among lovers. It was a delightful game, and Ruth and Ned played at it in all seriousness.

But each felt afraid, at times, that the other would discover the truth, which was simply that Ruth and Ned were entirely usual human beings. Therefore, both of them were inclined to pose a bit and both were oddly inconsistent from time to time.

Ned's proposal has been eccentric. His inclination had been to tell Ruth that he loved her in the conventional way; at the correct time, in a suitable place.

Instead, one evening in a theater box, he had leaned toward her and whispered:

"Marry me, Ruth, and you'll probably regret it."

And Ruth had whispered back:

"Fine! I'll take a chance."

Later, there were more definite details, explanations. Ruth's mother, a widow of some ten years past, rather enjoyed being shocked by what she called "the extreme modernity" of Ned's proposal.

After the engagement was publicly announced, there followed a period of rather hectic happiness for Ruth and Ned. Both talked of adapting themselves to their respective peculiarities, and both were happily unsuccessful.

Ruth was sophisticated. Ruth was diverting. Ruth laughed brightly at Ned's cynicisms and remained uncynical. She felt almost certain that she loved this uncommonly attractive man. Besides, others wanted him and she had him. *Voilà!*

She was not especially troubled about Ned's dinner party with the vivacious Lali Barnes. After all, nowadays, one is not apt to go into hysterics over such an incident. But nevertheless, Helen's gossip had given Ruth something to think about. Would it be just the same after they were married? Would Ned continue to go about with any attractive woman he might meet? And could she, Ruth, accept the situation and go her own way uncaring? Perhaps she, too, would come in contact with interesting men. "But I'd so much rather be with Ned than any other man. I never know what he's going to say or do, he's so awfully clever," she thought.

"But am I really in love with him?" she mused. "I don't think I feel half as badly as I ought to at the thought of losing him. And I'm not jealous either. Just curious. Perhaps he's made me this way. I believe I'm growing like him—practical and cynical, with an overdeveloped sense of humor. Why, Ned pokes fun at everything—love, marriage—everything I've been brought up to regard as fundamentally serious.

"And is Ned in love with me? The trouble is, he thinks I'm clever and I've tried to make him think so. But when he finds out, after we're married, that I'm not—well, there is always Lali Barnes. It's really too bad. I almost wish I'd never met him."

It had grown dark in the living room and Ruth was wondering vaguely if she should start to dress for dinner, when suddenly the room was flooded with light. Ruth blinked like a sleepy and somewhat petulant kitten.

"Oh, mother! It was so nice and dark!"

"But, my dear, it's time you started to dress," protested Mrs. George. "It's nearly seven."

Mrs. George in her black-velvet evening gown looked surprisingly young.

Ruth looked at her approvingly.

"Going out after dinner, mother?"

"Yes. Mr. Twombly—you know, the tall, thin Englishman—is taking me to see 'The Grand Duke.'" Mrs. George smiled at her daughter composedly.

"I do believe you're gayer than I am, mother. That Twombly man is an awfully attractive old bird."

"Old bird! My dear!"

"Well, you know what I mean. I think he's a bit of good news."

"He's very intelligent," was Mrs. George's comment. But her keen eyes twinkled.

"Mother," said Ruth irrelevantly, "will you go away with me for a few days—a week, perhaps?"

"Why, whatever for, my dear?"

Ruth hesitated.

"And what about Ned?" Mrs. George continued. "Won't he think it a bit odd if you run off this way when you've only been engaged a week? Aren't you feeling well?" she asked as Ruth remained silent. "Shouldn't you see the doctor?"

"No, mother. I'm just tired out, I guess. You know we've been on parties every single night."

10—Ains.

Mrs. George looked thoughtful.

"Why don't you run down to Lakewood for a few days?" she asked presently. "Mrs. Chote is down there now and can chaperon you. She's staying at the Laurel House."

"That's a splendid plan, mother. I'll wire for a room right away. I'll tell Ned to-night, too. I dare say he'll be able to amuse himself."

Mrs. George looked at her daughter sharply; she was shrewd enough to guess that something was wrong, but as Ruth rose lazily to her feet she only said:

"There's a small package for you on the hall table, dear. Ned's chauffeur left it."

In her room upstairs, Ruth unwrapped the package with interest. Ned's gifts were always unusual. This latest gift was a book of verse by James Crowe Ransom. She skimmed through its pages at the risk of being late for dinner. Some of the poems were daringly original. A part of one she liked especially and read it over several times.

And seeing never a friendly star
And feeling your way when paths are crossed,
Stand fast and turn three times around
And try the logic of the lost.

The idea intrigued her. "I might try out the system down at Lakewood," she mused, "but I'm afraid I'd have to turn around more than three times to really find myself." She sighed a little as she put the book away.

Later that evening the Mont Martre was very gay. Most of the tables were taken, and still people poured in steadily. Many stood about the entrance, frantically demanding audience with the omnipotent Charlie, the major-domo, who was trying to be in several places at once. The jovial violinist was at his best, playing the half jazz, half tango measure of the "St. Louis Blues." The frequenters of Park Avenue and Broadway regarded each other with interest.

A tall woman, wrapped in an ermine cloak, appeared in the doorway. Her three escorts were demanding a ring-side table. None left? But Mrs. Barnes had telephoned ahead of time.

"Let's not stand here arguing about it, Mark," said Lali Barnes quietly. The man addressed as Mark was short, with a bristly, blond mustache. He was obviously indignant that a table had not been reserved for their party. "Any table will do," she added, turning to Charlie. "I know we're very late."

Lali's entrance caused considerable stir. There were comments, half audible whispers.

Each of Lali's three escorts attempted to pull out her chair. The result was a rather undignified scramble. Lali laughed, a pleasant-sounding, rather loud laugh. She seated herself and allowed her wrap to slip from her shoulders. Men stared with frank admiration. Lali's gown was of gold brocade. The bodice was cut very low and fitted tightly. When she rose to dance, one could see that the stiff skirt flared at the hips, like a court dress of a Spanish *infanta*. The costume seemed perfectly suited to the bizarre decorative scheme of Mont Martre. In fact, the black-and-white striped hangings and the queer little drum-shaped lights appeared to have been put there solely for the purpose of providing this lovely woman with a fitting background.

At a table on the opposite side of the room, Ruth George had just asked her fiancé a question which he was answering with more enthusiasm than tact.

"You mean the woman in the gold dress? Why, that's Lali Barnes. You must have read about the divorce case." Ruth nodded curtly. "She's rather extraordinary, isn't she?" he went on. "Unusual coloring—that black, shining hair of hers, and those strange, light eyes." Ned's voice had become reminiscent. "I was fool enough to be quite

keen about her once. I even wrote poetry to her and all that sort of rot. The last poem I wrote, I remember, was hardly flattering. It was an honest impression of her after the glamour had worn off. Characteristically, she liked that one best of all."

"I didn't know you were a poet, Ned," Ruth said lightly.

He laughed.

"I'm not—now. I've changed from a potential Kipling, singing of his 'Woman who did not care,' to a happily engaged man."

"Why did she marry that awful Barnes man, anyway?" Ruth asked. "She must have known of his numerous affairs."

"Why, I remember asking her that very question just after she announced her engagement—I knew her pretty well, you see. She answered, with that peculiar surface smile of hers: 'Well, Ned, if you must know, I like the way he parts his hair—just to the left of the middle.'

"Lali, you're a fool and you know it," I told her, and she replied that Morley was also a fool and that, therefore, they would in all probability get along splendidly."

"But, then, it's her own fault that she's made a mess of her life."

"It's not her fault that there are men like Morley Barnes," Ned said, with unnecessary sharpness. "Lali was wrong about him. He's no fool. He's just a rotter of the worst type."

Ruth extinguished her cigarette. She chose to ignore Ned's defense of Lali.

"Let's dance!" she said abruptly.

They made a handsome couple as they danced with the easy grace that comes only after long practice. Ned's sleek, black hair and lively, dark eyes contrasted pleasantly with Ruth's pink-and-white fairness.

"You don't mind if I go away for a few days, do you?" Ruth asked in one of the waits between the music. "I've

been feeling tired lately—too many parties, I guess. I thought I'd run down to Lakewood for about a week."

"That's a good idea. I'll come down for the week-end," suggested Ned.

Ruth lied rather weakly.

"Well, the fact is, I went to see the doctor and he said——"

"Just as you wish, of course," Ned broke in quietly. He felt strangely disturbed, almost angry.

Ruth made no attempt to conciliate him.

"Then I'll leave to-morrow and be back in time for Mrs. Bonner's party."

Ned kept his annoyance well under control.

"You're a beautifully modernized specimen of your sex, Ruth," he said, and quoted, half laughing: "'Here today and there to-morrow——'"

"Yes, I know. That is so," Ruth finished for him smilingly.

"Lakewood, next stop!" Women covered the soot, which had stuck to the powder of their faces, with more powder; men brushed off their hats carefully with their coat sleeves; but Ruth, being very tired, slept on. The porter looked at her a moment in passing. He was uncertain whether or not to awaken her. She was more than likely to be bound for Lakehurst, the last stop.

The train ground into the station. There was the usual bustle as people hoisted huge suit cases before them. And still Ruth slept.

Suddenly she felt a hand on her shoulder, and heard a low, distinctly pleasant male voice.

Ruth jumped to her feet.

"This isn't Lakewood?"

Her benefactor nodded assent and reached for her bag.

"I couldn't help hearing you say something about Lakewood to the chap who saw you off," he said, by way of explanation. "You see, I was seated

directly behind you. You were sleeping the sleep of the just, so I thought I'd take a chance and wake you."

"Thanks, a lot," Rush said as she slipped into her coat. "I'm most awfully grateful. I should have gone all the way to Lakehurst." He helped her off the train in silence, and handed her bag to a waiting porter.

"Thank you, again," she said and, with a brief "Good-by," climbed aboard the Laurel House bus. She half hoped that he would follow. He was extraordinarily attractive, and his apparent lack of interest in her person piqued her curiosity. She watched him move off down the platform and hail a taxi.

As the bus rumbled toward the hotel, she still considered him. She decided that she liked his type. He was of medium height, slender, with slightly stooped shoulders. He was blond and his narrow, gray eyes wrinkled at the corners when he smiled. "Laughter wrinkles," she thought, "for he can't be over twenty-six." His features were lean and regular, though the finely cut lips were rather too thin. There was a humorous twist to the mouth.

That night, in her room adjoining the mild-mannered Mrs. Chote's, Ruth prepared for a long, delicious sleep. Her problems could wait until morning.

She opened wide the window. Through it came the scent of pine-needles, cleanly, freshly odorous. She crawled beneath the smooth, cool sheets and in a few minutes was fast asleep.

During the night frost came, and in the morning the pines and bushes glistened with silver sequins. Ice had formed thinly on the surface of the lakes.

Ruth breakfasted very late in her room and started for a walk in the early afternoon, leaving a note for Mrs. Chote.

The snow and ice were melting and ran in bright rivulets in the gutters and

along the ruts in the dirt road called the Lake Drive. The air was sharp, but the sun shone hotly, warming the collar of her fur coat, so that she felt inclined to throw it open at the neck.

Ruth was heading for the Second Lake. She had known Lakewood well as a child and remembered a certain trail that led off into the woods. Few people ventured there, especially in winter, for odd tales were told of the persons living along the wooded shores of the Second Lake. But Ruth, at the age of ten, had explored this mysterious territory in company with an intrepid English governess. Together they had scorned the beaten path encircling Lake Carisaljo, where countless fat men and puffing, middle-aged women took their constitutionals. They sought, instead, the faint trails through the pines which were more than likely to end in a blind thicket or a cranberry bog.

Ruth struck into the heavily wooded country between the two lakes. She soon located the trail and followed it with a keen pleasure. It seemed like an old friend. The sun threw deliciously awkward shadows between snow-covered pines and, where the undergrowth became thicker, puny branches shook beneath their weight of chipping ice. The trail twisted and turned snakelike, and Ruth hurried her steps with a sudden curiosity to see beyond the next bend.

She turned the bend quickly—and stopped. There was no trail! It had vanished entirely and in front of her were tall pines and patches of untracked snow.

Of course, she went on. So far, the going had been easy and the bushes and brambles had done little to hinder her progress. These woods were cheerful, friendly. To Ruth's eyes, the whole scene presented the appearance of a very jolly Christmas Card.

But Ruth entirely lacked a very need-

ful something, which the English governess had possessed in a good measure—a sense of direction. However, she kept on her way, quite satisfied that she knew in exactly what direction home lay, though the going had become somewhat hazardous on account of the snow-covered roots of trees and a thicker growth of bushes. It was getting late and the shadows were lengthening into great patches of darkness. The sun still shone, not in proud brilliance, but with rosy geniality. Ruth went on, heedless of the fact that she could no longer see the shores of the Second Lake.

She was enjoying the solitude. Why, she had come down here for that very thing—solitude, and a chance to think things out. Then, very suddenly, she realized that she had made no advances whatever toward solving her particular problem.

She had not, in fact, given Ned a thought. Now, as she pushed her way between dripping boughs, she tried to concentrate on her fiancé. Had she missed him? No—yes—she couldn't be sure. And she *must* be sure, one way or the other. She must analyze her feelings. She must— The words of Ransom's fantastic poem recurred unaccountably in her memory.

Stand fast and turn three times around
And try the logic of the lost.

She felt a sudden, childish desire to take the words of the poem literally—a kind of impulsive superstition, which completely ignored common sense. She had come to a small, open space in the woods, and thought it an excellent place to try the experiment. She stood still for a moment and then, closing her eyes, turned three times around. The closed eyes had been her own idea, filched from some subconscious remembrance of childish games. When she opened them again and looked about her, she wondered, bewilderedly, if magic had, indeed, been at

work. The trees and bushes about the little inclosure were unmarked by any freak of nature. To Ruth, turning vaguely from left to right in a vain endeavor to exercise a sense of direction she did not possess, they seemed uncannily alike. At last, unable to find the lost trail, Ruth stood still, furiously angry at herself for her stupidity. "What a perfect fool I am!" she thought savagely. "Trying to play blindman's buff with myself out in the woods, all on account of a few lines of verse!"

She had no idea where she was, but she pushed ahead resolutely, feeling sure that, with any kind of luck, she would come upon either the Second Lake or the Lake Drive. After fifteen minutes of rough traveling, Ruth gave a little cry of relief. There, ahead of her, lay one of the lakes. She had a fleeting hope that it was Carisaljo, but as she neared the edge she could find no sign of a path. No, it was the Second Lake, beyond a doubt, and entirely unfamiliar country. She must have come a long way. The shore line curved sharply on either side of her. Across from her the lake had narrowed to a kind of swamp. In fact, Ruth stood in the only clear space that she could see in the vicinity. She realized that it would be impossible to follow the shore. Even where she stood the ground oozed water beneath her feet with a squashy, disagreeable sound.

The legends of the Second Lake returned to her—those same unreasonable tales which she had so gayly dismissed earlier in the afternoon. But things seemed different now. There were the shadows and the cold and the uncertainty of location to consider.

The sun hung rotting in the sky like some great tropic fruit. Its rays slanted into the lake and the ice and the waters beneath the ice were red as blood. The girl shuddered. The body of a murdered woman had once

floated beneath the ice of the Second Lake, so people had said. It seemed that these waters had received their coloring, not from the dying sun, but from a red gash across a white forehead.

Ruth laughed a little at herself, rather thinly. "What a fantastic idea! Utterly absurd of course." She turned away from the lake, but always her eyes wandered back to it. There was a certain morbid fascination in the weird coloring.

She pushed her way into the woods again and presently came to a stubbled field in a wide clearing. It was almost dark and there was a light in the window of a dilapidated log cabin some distance to her left, but the idea of making inquiries there did not appeal to Ruth. She could not get those wretched stories out of her mind. Perhaps she might find a trail along the edge of the field. She proceeded slowly and her care was rewarded. She came to a path, but it led to the woods again. Would she never be out of them? Several times she nearly fell. She stumbled along, stopping frequently to stare about her in fear that she might lose the trail. She was terrified; her heart beat suffocatingly. Was the path getting narrower? Would it end in a bog or a dump heap? A sudden vision of Mrs. Chote whole-heartedly consuming steaming tea and toast at the Laurel House rose before her eyes.

Suddenly, at five o'clock in the afternoon, it was black night. The realization of this was too much for poor Ruth. She turned and ran back along the path. She would take a chance on the inmates of that cabin. At least, there had been a light there.

Then, from a short distance off and coming always blessedly nearer, she heard a glorious sound! A commonplace sound which, under ordinary circumstances, Ruth would have regarded as trivial. But now the heavenly choir could not have equaled it. Some one

was whistling cheerfully; and the tune!—even that was familiar—why, Ruth had danced to it two nights ago at the Mont Martre, an inconsequential, jolly tune called "Bimini Bay."

Ruth stood still and waited. Tears of relief came to her eyes. She reached into her pocket for her handkerchief and touched her powder box. She smiled to herself. This rescuer, this hero should not find her with a shiny nose. She dabbed at her face quickly, forgetting the darkness.

And then she saw him rounding a bend in the path, a not over tall figure walking with long strides. He did not slacken his pace. He came up to her—passed her. Ruth stood still a moment dazedly. He had seemed so patently her rescuer that it was hard for her to realize that he had not even seen her, but the whistling sounded farther and farther away, and, with a little cry, Ruth ran after him. Hearing the cry, he turned quickly. Ruth tripped and nearly fell, as she reached him; stretched a hand toward him. A firm arm shot out and closed about her shoulders. Glad of the protection, almost fainting, she leaned against him for a moment with her eyes closed. She felt a sudden flash of light across her face. Then a low voice spoke apologetically.

"Sorry, but really I had to see who you were." He put the small flash light back in his pocket. "I was consumed with curiosity."

Ruth recognized the voice. She disengaged herself and stood beside him.

"I've lost my way and I've been wandering about in these woods for so long that I'm afraid I'm a little unstrung," she said. "It's been a pretty trying experience."

"Well, at any rate, it's over now," he assured her cheerfully, "and I'll see you home. We're only a short distance from the Lake Drive. I know Lakewood well, and this is one of my favor-

ite walks." Then he added more crisply: "Take my arm, please, and we'll be out of this in no time."

To Ruth he seemed very capable and strangely comforting. They walked for some minutes in silence, but Ruth's nerves were still on edge.

"Would you mind whistling?" she begged suddenly. He gave a sudden low laugh.

"Not at all. What'll you have?"
" 'Bimini Bay,' please."

He whistled the tune clearly as they went along the narrow trail, and within a short time they reached the Lake Drive.

To Ruth's surprise he turned to the left.

"Isn't this the longest way around?" she asked.

"We're not going around. At least, not yet. We're going to get something hot to drink at the Lake Tea House. It's just a step, and I'll phone from there for a taxi."

The cheerful lights of the Tea House shone through the trees ahead of them as he spoke, and they were soon inside.

When he removed his heavy coat and muffler, after he had ordered hot drinks, she saw how slim he was. His lips were blue with the cold, but he smiled at her as he poked the open fire and caused it to blaze up again brightly. Ruth thought him singularly frank, and quite free from affectation. She could not help comparing him somewhat guiltily, however, with Ned. Ned seemed somehow older, much more cynical, far more sophisticated. And yet this man, though younger, had obvious poise.

Presently he went to the back of the cabin to phone. She could hear his voice clearly.

"Hello, Laurel House? Please send a taxi to the Lake Tea House right away. And tell any one who might inquire after Miss Ruth George that she

is quite all right and will be back in about half an hour."

Ruth gasped. He knew her name. He left messages for her without asking her permission. He was extraordinary, fascinating!

"How did you know my name?"

Ruth asked curiously when he came back to the little table near the fire. "Why did you take the trouble to find it out?"

He laughed.

"Well, you were the only passenger in the Laurel House bus. Very early this morning I went over there and looked at the register. Simple, isn't it? I took the trouble to find out who you were because you interested me. We both come from New York and I felt, somehow, that I must have met you at one time or another."

"But you're way ahead of me," said Ruth. "I don't even know your name."

"It's Peter Prescott. But you must promise not to tell any one, because it's a secret." His gray eyes smiled at her boyishly. "You see my nerves are more or less shot to pieces and my doctor prescribed a complete rest and change of scene," he explained. "I'm supposed to keep away from everybody and stay down here until I've snapped out of it. That's why I'm stopping at a cheap little boarding house in the town. I left New York without telling anybody where I was going and—well, here I am."

"That's a very complete account of yourself, Peter Prescott," she laughed, and added: "No one shall learn your secret from me."

At that moment tea arrived and conversation was suspended. An old negro carried it, steaming on a tray, together with delicious-looking, hot, buttered toast.

The man gulped the hot liquid gratefully and Ruth noticed that the hand which held the cup twitched.

She was about to speak of this, when

the door opened to admit a much bundled up chauffeur whose crimson nose poked out ludicrously above swathes of muffler.

"Taxi," he said plaintively, his voice thinned by the cold.

On her return to the Laurel House that evening Ruth made the fewest possible explanations to Mrs. Chote who, though slightly harassed by Ruth's unaccountable absence, was still amiable. She was the perfect type of modern chaperon—pleasant, disinterested.

A letter had arrived from Ned. Ruth read it curiously and decided that it was wholly unlike him. It was demonstrative and had none of Ned's usual brilliancies of speech or caustic humor. The keynote of the entire letter was naturalness, frankness.

Ruth was not sure that she liked the change. Ned was Ned, and it seemed a shame to change him. The original, witty, self-contained Ned had vanished.

Then an uncomfortable thought struck her. She had admired in the delightful Peter Prescott the very qualities that had somehow vexed her in Ned's letter. The whole situation, instead of clearing up, was becoming more and more involved.

Soon, too, she should begin to miss Ned—if she was going to miss him. She reflected guiltily that she was looking forward to the meeting with Peter to-morrow. She defended herself to herself, almost angrily. The man was a New Yorker, obviously a gentleman. He had given a full and frank account of himself. They had discovered on the way home that they had a number of mutual friends and acquaintances. And Ned had not bothered to tell her of his dinner engagement with Lali Barnes. And so on and so on, until her conscience was lulled into dreamless slumber.

But there was Ned to consider.

Since Ruth's departure from the city, his deportment had been that of a model

fiancé. He was even a bit surprised himself that he had felt not the slightest inclination to dance or go to the play without Ruth.

Ruth's nearness had always given him the feeling that he must live up to a certain reputation for cleverness which he had somehow achieved in her sight. Her absence broke the spell. Distance had given him courage and he had written his fiancée an honest, boyish love letter. He thought, "She'll find out some time, anyway, that I'm not especially clever. The sooner she realizes it, the better, though I dare say it'll be something of a shock to her, poor girl."

So he had started the letter defiantly with "Dearest Girl" and finished with—"All my love, Ned."

The letter lay crumpled in the pocket of Ruth's fur coat for two days, at the end of which time it was consigned to the wastebasket together with the mangled remains of a cake of milk chocolate.

Ned began to appear at his office earlier than he had in years. He needed work to keep him busy so that he should not miss Ruth too much.

But when two days passed without bringing a word from Ruth, Ned felt depressed and vaguely anxious. He phoned the Laurel House just before dinner time on the second day. No, Miss George's room did not answer. They would inquire at the desk.

"Miss George isn't in yet. She went out early this afternoon," was the message that came to him over the wire.

Ned banged up the receiver. Anxiety was giving place to annoyance. Presently the phone rang.

"I just called up to find out if you had heard from Ruth." Mrs. George's voice was anxious.

"Have you?" he asked, evading the question; hating to admit that he had not heard.

"Nothing but a post card the first day."

But Mrs. George was quick to guess the truth. She was much concerned and finally asked him to accompany the Englishman, Twombly, and herself to the theater. Ned accepted the invitation because he could think of no plausible excuse for refusing.

The play was a brilliant satire on modern marriage and divorce. The cast bulged with stars, but Ned was glad when it was over.

"Thank Heaven!" he murmured below his breath.

As they waited for a taxi Lali Barnes came out of the theater, gorgeously cold looking in her fur wrap. With her was Mark, of the bristly, blond mustache. He looked small beside her—and knew it. She nodded brightly to Mrs. George and spoke to Ned in an undertone.

"I want you to take me home, Ned." Her voice, though low, was tense.

"But——"

"No 'but' about it." She flashed a shrewd look at Mrs. George and her escort. "Can't you see that you're making the crowd? They're keen to go some place to dance and they'll not want you."

"All right," said Ned quietly. He knew better than to argue with Lali. Besides, he had noticed a look of disturbance on her handsome face. He felt very sorry for her. After all was said and done——

While Ned made his explanations to Mrs. George Lali summarily dismissed the indignant Mark.

And so it came about, for the second time, that Lali Barnes unburdened herself to Ned Grey, who was, perhaps unfortunately for him, an excellent listener.

"But, Lali, you can't go on this way. You're headed straight for the rocks," Ned protested when their cab was well on its way up Riverside Drive.

Lali sat beside him, white-faced, silent. Her fingers plucked at her ermine wrap.

"Ned, I had to see you again," she said at last. "I had to talk to somebody. I don't think you realize——"

He cut in brutally, for he feared that she was on the verge of tears.

"I realize that you've made a mess of things all round. Why did you ever make a confidant of Morley, in the first place?"

"You know I was half insane at the time," she said defiantly, "and now, almost any day——" She was sobbing; low, horrid sounds, peculiarly unbearable to Ned.

"Don't do that!" he commanded sharply, and then as the sobs continued, he pleaded desperately: "Be a good sport, Lali, for God's sake!"

She straightened in her seat at that, with something of her old assurance.

"You're right, Ned. I'll have to face what comes," she said after a long silence. "You've been splendid to me!"

He returned the pressure of her hand with a pleasurable sense of his own importance. Oh, he knew how to handle women, all right.

"Say, if you folks wants to go to Albany, I'll have to fill 'er up with gas!" exclaimed the driver, stopping the cab with a jerk. And the silent pair realized suddenly that they were passing Inspiration Point.

It was the last afternoon of Ruth's stay in Lakewood. The day was clear and cold, but the sun was warm enough to permit a last drive through the pines.

Peter and Ruth had been together constantly since the day of Ruth's adventure. There had been delightful walks in the woods without ever a fear of getting lost; sleigh rides, too, on days such as this; and one whole afternoon of skating on Lake Carisaljo. The companionship had been very pleasant.

The sleigh moved smoothly. The

horses snorted, feeling the cold, tossed their heads, and blew viciously through their noses. Wrapped in fur robes, Peter and Ruth were in holiday spirits.

"When we get into New York this evening——" Peter began presently.

"We!" Ruth exclaimed in surprise. "But I thought you had planned to stay longer. You said——"

"Yes, I'd intended staying at least another week, but I got a telegram this morning calling me back to the city."

Ruth was much concerned.

"But, Peter, you shouldn't be bothered with business worries yet!"

He laughed, not at all like a sick man.

"Oh, I shall be all right. Don't worry about me!"

That same evening, in the city, the snow fell steadily, freezing quickly.

When Ruth arrived at the Park Avenue apartment, she found that Mrs. George had not yet returned from an afternoon bridge. Ruth was rather relieved, for there was something she wished to do and she rather feared that her mother might try to influence her against it. Accordingly, a few minutes later, she sat down and wrote:

MY DEAR NED: Since I've been away I've thought a lot about our engagement. It seems to me that we're not really congenial and that it would be better for us, both if——

The ink dried on the pen as Ruth wondered why it was harder to tell Ned her decision than she had anticipated. She felt quite sorry for him, but then, he had never truly understood her. Not as Peter understood her—Peter who was so frank and outspoken. Ned's eccentricities, which she had once adored, she now looked upon as pure affectation. She did not know that he had manufactured them expressly for her benefit.

The maid was coming through the hall with the evening papers. Ruth gave her the note to mail. Idly, Ruth took one of the papers and seated her-

self comfortably in the living room to wait for her mother's return. A headline caught her eye.

IDENTITY OF CORRESPONDENT MADE KNOWN.

New Developments in Barnes Divorce Case.

New York, Jan. 25.—Morley Barnes names Peter B. Prescott, son of wealthy banker, as correspondent.

There could be no mistake, for accompanying the story was an excellent picture of Peter, snapped on the links at Piping Rock.

The paper fell to the floor unheeded. Ruth sat for some moments, her brain dizzy with conflicting thoughts. At first she could not, would not, believe this thing of Peter. Then gradually her mind cleared and she saw both Ned and Peter, not as she had imagined them to be, but as they really were: Ned's demonstrative, boyish letters; Peter's beautiful lies. The two men automatically changed places in her mind. She felt that she knew her fiancé for the first time. He was all that she had thought Peter was. And Peter? Well, the Peter she had known didn't exist; except possibly in Ned.

"And to think that I should have believed Ned involved with that Barnes woman!" she thought contritely.

Then—that note! That foolish, outrageous note which she had just mailed. Or was it mailed?

Ruth jumped to her feet and ran into the hall.

"Martha, that note. Have you mailed it?" she called breathlessly.

"Yes, Miss Ruth. It's just gone," the girl replied, smiling.

"Oh, all right," Ruth moaned.

"Ruth!"

She turned quickly.

"Ned! Oh, I'm so glad you came!"

"I couldn't wait to see you," he said.

"I'm glad you came, Ned, awfully glad. But I want you to promise me something."

"Granted," he said lightly.

"Well, I just wrote you a note. I want you to tear it up as soon as you get it."

"But I get so few notes from you!"

"Ned," said Ruth quite seriously, "I'll write you every day from now on, if you'll promise."

"It's a bargain." He laughed delightedly.

Ruth came to him and kissed him.

Peter Prescott threw down the newspaper he had been reading.

"That's very unfortunate," he said.

There was no hint of emotion on the face of the woman seated opposite him in the Ritz grill. But her voice shook.

"You take it very coolly, Peter. When you left for Lakewood to avoid that man from *Town Tatler* you were in a dreadful funk."

"That seems a long while ago, Lali," he said gently. "Everything has changed since your telegram came. Of course, I knew the answer." He motioned toward the newspaper, then went on slowly, choosing his words: "But I never realized before what an awfully good sport you've been through the whole thing. You've done your best to keep me out of it, and you haven't spared yourself. I'm horribly ashamed of myself for trying to get out from under when the crash came. Now, it's my turn. If you still want me, Lali, we'll try to pick up the pieces together."

The look on Lali's face should have repaid him.

"You're quite sure you know what you're doing, Peter?"

"Quite!" he said, half laughing. "My family'll most probably throw me out for getting my handsome face all over the front pages. That means I'll have to hunt up a job—hideous thought!"

Lali laughed back at him. She was very lovely when she laughed.

Ruth's image faded slowly from his mind as he kissed Lali across the table.



In Broadway Playhouses

By
Dorothy Parker

The Force of Example

SOMEbody—I wish it had been I—once wrote a story of two old salts who were lured into a hall where a temperance lecture was going on. While the lecturer thundered forth denunciations of alcohol and its friends, stereopticon views, in highly realistic colors, were shown of expert drunkards in the very act of tossing off great bumpers of various famous beverages, to bring shudders of horror to the chaste spines of the spectators. The two sailors bore the sight as long as it was humanly possible, and then, desperate with the thirst brought on by the pictures, rushed from the hall and made a dash for the nearest bar.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I am reminded of those two old salts when I think of the audience at the Henry Miller Theater, where is playing "The National Anthem," Mr. Hartley Manners' four-act sermon on the evils of jazz and drink. For something over two hours—and it seems like a great deal over—the audience cowers in its seats, wincing with horror as Mr. Manners' characters portray the hideous effects of liquor, and jumping guiltily each time the off-stage jazz orchestra performs a particularly sinister crash. And before the final curtain is decently down, the audience rushes from the theater, like children just released from the

schoolroom, scarcely able to wait to get to the nearest dance club or hotel grill, to do some of the dancing and drinking of which they have been so vividly reminded.

Miss Laurette Taylor's following, of which I am a charter member, has long felt that any play would be all right for them, just so long as she was in it. But, really, "The National Anthem" puts almost too much of a strain on the old friends. It isn't, in the first place, quite fair to refer to it as a play. It is just four acts of propaganda for cleaner and duller evenings for the younger married set.

Mr. Manners presents to us in his first act a young heroine who marries the black sheep of the country club, with the idea of reforming him. The idea, however, does not go through, for the young man not only looks on drinking and dancing as the only career worth while, but persuades his wife to get in some constructive imbibing and jazzing on her own account. And thus they go, down, down, down, until the wife takes a little midnight snack of bichloride of mercury, by mistake, and the husband, rushing to fetch a doctor for her, is opportunely killed by one of those off-stage motors which are so obliging to playwrights who have to get rid of their characters somehow or

other. Even after that, there is another act showing that the wife is going to recover, and that the total abstainer who has always loved her is going to be right there waiting for her to get her strength back.

The trouble with overvigorous propaganda is that it invariably drives one right over to the opposing forces. One finds oneself on the side of the reprobate husband all the way through "The National Anthem." Mr. Hartley Manners has sought to bring home the difference between the husband and the abstaining friend by making the friend such an incredibly awful prig that only a mother could stand having him around the house. Also, the life which the author suggests that the young people lead, instead of an existence of synthetic stimulation, does not seem to exert an especially strong appeal to the average healthy young person. The heroine is able to keep her husband away from dancing and hooch for the first six months of their married life, and Mr. Manners makes her explain the methods by which she beguiles him from the white lights. They went to the opera, relates the lady, adding laughingly that her husband hates the opera; they visited picture galleries; and they read aloud to each other. So you see, it was small wonder that after six months of that, the husband turned to jazz and alcohol as a flower to the sun.

It is right along in this part that Mr. Manners falls most heavily into one of the most popular traps on the path of the reformer. I am the last one to hold any brief for the human race, but what I say is: show me any one, even the most hardened of wretches, who wouldn't be only too delighted to fall right in with the reformers' plans and give up his old ways—if the reformers would just offer him a substitute that would be half as much fun.

If, however, you feel that you are strong enough to stand being violently

scolded by Mr. Manners for some two hours and a half, there are several good reasons why you should go to see "The National Anthem." The first one is, of course, Laurette Taylor. As a friend and well-wisher, though, you will want to swear out a warrant for the arrest of the person or persons who committed her costumes. It would seem as if Mr. Manners must have designed those gowns himself, with a view to making more graphic the horrors of debauchery. The second reason is the fine performance that Ralph Morgan gives in the rôle of the dissolute husband. And you really owe it to yourself to see Dodson Mitchell play the ne'er-do-well's father in exactly the manner that he played the rôle of the innkeeper in "The Tavern."

And no matter what they may—and do—say about "The National Anthem" as a play, there is always this to be said for it: There is no place in town where you can work up a heartier thirst.

It is with downcast head and burning blushes that I come to the next item on my list, for if I say what I think about it I must forever after roam the earth bearing the brand of the lowbrow. And if I say what I think I ought to say, to win a rating among the intelligentsia—well, you know yourself that would be nothing more nor less than downright dishonesty, and I have enough on my conscience as it is. So perhaps it would be best to grasp the dilemma by the forelock, and take a chance on telling the truth.

The cause of all this emotional upheaval on my part is the discussion of the *Chauve Souris*, which is the Bat Theater of Moscow, brought bodily here by Mr. Morris Gest after a season in Paris and half a one in London.

I shouldn't want to be one to hit the Russians when they are down, and all that; but it has come to the stage where these poor nerves jangle nastily every time the local *cognoscenti* hail as incom-

parable art any bit of literature, play-writing, or stagecraft that comes out of Russia. I don't say the Russians were not good boys while they had it, or that they can't do perfectly splendid things when they set their minds on it. But what I don't really grasp is just why "Russian" and "great" should have come to be looked upon as synonyms. All I say is, the Russians can turn out mediocre things occasionally, just the same as the rest of us—a mild enough statement, surely, but one which has caused the writer to be regarded as a dangerous reactionary.

The *Chauve Souris*—remember, this is a purely personal view of the thing—is a succession of nice, clean, vaudeville acts, presented against gayly colored scenery by competent performers. The program includes one number where figures on a clock come to life and do a little dance, one where two actors, unconvincingly made up as elderly people, quaver a song and dodder through a dance, one where two young ladies who seem to be the heart and soul of respectability sing a few parlor songs at the piano, and one where grandma and grandpa smile benignly down from their frames at their dancing descendants.

You may drop in at any school entertainment, and see exactly the same things done, and, if I may say it without being immediately committed to a home for backward girls, done in exactly the same way. Nice, certainly, and clean as a virgin pin, but scarcely anything over which one could conscientiously swoon with ecstasy. If people—as did the gathering of intellectuals at the opening performance—are going to cry "*Brava!*" and "*Bis!*" for these acts, what will they have left to do when something really remarkable happens in the theater?

The intellectuals were left practically worthless and spent, at the conclusion of the evening. So carried away were

they by their emotions that one dropping casually in would have thought it was a revival meeting and not a theatrical performance. The lady sitting behind me—she wore a scarlet-satin bandanna about her head and a string of amber beads, each about the size of an average billiard ball, so she must have been somebody—gasped, at the conclusion of a number showing a parade of wooden soldiers, that it made her feel as if she were watching the surf break over great rocks. The lady two seats down, though, said she felt as if she were rushing over plains with the wind blowing clean and cold in her hair. One young literary light summed up the whole entertainment by saying, in a voice weak with ecstasy, that it was very, very adorable. I do hope none of them ever chance to attend the closing exercises of a children's dancing class. They would undoubtedly burst a blood vessel over the exquisite simplicity of it all.

I cannot honestly say that a little personal feeling toward the attitude of the audience does not always enter into my estimate of the *Chauve Souris*. Straining to be as fair as possible, though, I should like to explain that at the *Chauve Souris* one may see delightful colors and hear pleasant music, and that in Nikita Balieff, who explains the events in something of the solicitous manner of Ed Wynn, one will meet a delightful comedian. And that is every bit as far as I can go, and still be true to my better self.

Speaking of the Russians, as I was but a moment ago, naturally brings up the subject of "*The Czarina*," in which Doris Keane is starring, at the Empire. Translated from the Hungarian, this wholly satisfying comedy shows a few glimpses of the home life of Catherine the Great, and some of her boy friends—of whom, according to the best authorities, there was quite a jolly little crowd. Various things, generally overlooked by producers, go to make up the

success of "The Czarina"—the play is extremely entertaining, the cast exceedingly good, the setting picturesque, and the costumes charming. Miss Keane, of course, plays *Catherine*, and to call this comedy performance of hers simply great is to expose the dullness of mere words. Basil Rathbone is a brave and dashing hero—and the recipients of *Catherine's* attentions were heroes, if anybody ever was—and Frederick Kerr is delightful as the empress' chancellor. In a word, a perfectly fine evening is had by all. Miss Keane has not had a new play for goodness knows how long, and it doesn't seem as if she were going to have much chance ever to play anything but "The Czarina," in our time, at least.

The month brought us quite a few translations, in the way of plays. Among them was a jolly little trifle called "The Rubicon," right from the French of Edouard Bourdet. If I were to tell you the plot of the piece, in detail, you would feel that the only honorable thing for you to do would be to marry me. So I had best just give you a sketchy idea of the thing by dismissing it as one of those works in which the wife is a wife-in-name-only for the first two acts, and ceases to be presumably during the second intermission. Until you have seen "The Rubicon," you really have no idea how dull good, honest dirt can be. Indeed, one forgets that one is present at an orgy of licentiousness, and is entirely too busy yawning to have any time to blush.

Possibly the cast, chief among which are Violet Heming, Kenneth Hill, and Warburton Gamble, do much to make the play seem far from dashing. Their united efforts make the comedy about as spicily Gallic as a New England boiled dinner.

"Madame Pierre," adapted from Brieux's "Les Hanneçons," was done over here under the title of "The Affinity" by Lawrence Irving and Mabel

Hackney some years ago. We did not see Mr. Irving and his wife when they did the play, but if they were half so good as Estelle Winwood and Roland Young are in the leading rôles, any bets that we might make would be irrevocably lost. Miss Winwood seems to have been made with the idea in mind that some day she was to play the suffocatingly clinging vine in this bitter comedy which shows that you cannot escape the bonds of matrimony by going to house-keeping without a marriage ceremony to start you off. Mr. Young, in rather more of a part than they have been giving him, is, of course, fine. It doesn't seem as if he could be anything else, even if he gave all his time to trying.

As for the musical entertainments of the period, a few moans and a couple of hearty gnashes of the teeth, and they will be let quickly out. "Frank Fay's Fables," engineered, as you have doubtless fathomed from its title, by Frank Fay, stole softly away from the Park Theater after a few thin weeks. And even those who had its interest at heart could not have wished to see it try to struggle on any longer.

"The Blushing Bride," which has Cleo Mayfield and Cecil Lean as its leading lights, seems to be, at a conservative estimate, one of the least entertaining musical comedies you ever saw in your life. There are several tunes that are mildly pretty, and the Swanson sisters, who are much more than that. And that, really, is about all.

"For Goodness Sake" runs "The Blushing Bride" a close second in the way of dullness, but it can never be fully as dull while it keeps the services of Fred Astaire and his sister Adele—who now turns out to be a decidedly engaging comédienne. The cast includes Jack Hazzard and the pleasant Marjorie Gateson, but even so it does not seem able to make the grade.

By way of ending things up with a little good news, I have waited till now

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to get in a few words for "The Cat and the Canary." Even to recall the name of this new thriller by John Willard is to bring reminiscent chills to the spine and chatterings to the teeth. If you ask me—and I do hope you will—I should say that "The Cat and the Canary" is every bit as good as "The Bat."

It really wouldn't be fair to tell you the plot of the piece, for that would spoil your innocent fun when you see it. Also, it would be practically impossible to give a coherent account of the goings-on and still keep one's sanity. Of course, when you get home, you can think of several little things that don't seem to fit together with any great smoothness, but you are entirely too wrought up to notice any such trifles during the performance. When you go, you will really find it best to purchase three seats and occupy the middle one, leaving an empty seat on each side. Otherwise, you will grasp the arm of your neighbor in your terrified desire for human contact, and such things are so apt to be misunderstood.

Henry Hull and Florence Eldridge head the company, and Blanche Frederici does notable work as an old voodoo woman. A delightful show, really. It turned the entire front of my hair gray with horror.

If you never see another thing in the theater, arrange to witness the second act of "To the Ladies!" If you can see but part of it, get in at the last half and see the banquet scene. Then, if you don't see anything else on the American stage, it really doesn't matter very much. You will have seen the best bit of satire you could ever hope to see.

Marc Connelly and George Kaufman, authors of "Dulcy," have another hit, and one almost appalling in size, in "To the Ladies!" It contains some truly gorgeous bits of satire on the American business man—shafts so keen and quick that it is regrettably doubtful if that

gentleman, in witnessing the play, will even realize that he is being hit. The scene showing the Kinkaid Piano Company's annual banquet is just about the most magnificent thing you ever saw. I know I said something like that before, but you can't help talking about it, once you have seen it. Nothing else seems very much worth talking about.

Certainly the not infrequent touches of rubber-stamped sentiment aren't, nor are those portions of the last act which do not deftly kid efficiency in the business office. It doesn't seem as if the Messrs. Kaufman and Connelly, so remorseless usually in tracking down hokum, could have committed those scenes in which Miss Helen Hayes speaks feelingly of the pleasures poverty confers on the married, because it gives them such perfectly splendid opportunities to make sacrifices for each other. One wonders, really, why she does so much to help her husband to success in business if she thinks it such great fun to be poor. It seems as if she were just deliberately spoiling her own good time.

Otto Kruger is little less than marvelous as the hero, and Helen Hayes is a charming heroine. Unfortunately, she has seen fit to employ a heavy Southern accent, which rather disconcerts you. You keep expecting it to have something to do with the plot of the play, and you are rather at a loss when the only reference made to it is the announcement that she is supposed to have come from Mobile. If only the authors had made their heroine come from Utica, it would have saved the audience a lot of brain-fag. Doubtless some one has urged Miss Hayes to employ the accent, saying that it is just too cute. Which is exactly what it is.

But really this is beside the issue. The thing about "To the Ladies!" is that banquet scene. I would rather have written that one scene than be the author of the "Encyclopædia Britannica."

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

SELDOM is it given to an author to reproduce life itself faithfully, with the high lights and the shading which make up the experience. Even more infrequently does a writer set down life as it is and throw into relief the romance of it, even in the midst of its more trying aspects, and the essential vitality of the whole human relationship. Too often the tendency is marked to emphasize the cheap, the tawdry, the irksome commonplace and to pass it out as the very coin of life. True, there is that side. But there is also the Emersonian compensation provided by the occasional manifestations of self-sacrifice, of real courage—yes, of true love, if you will—which after all, are much the stronger influences when the sum total is added up.

IN our opinion Calvin Johnston is one of the really few present-day writers who in their works set down life photographically, injecting at the same time into their interpretation of it a humanity, a sympathy, which reconciles the more discordant elements and resolves them into a balanced whole. For, if life is not wholly good, neither is it entirely evil.

WE have scheduled for the June number a novelette which ranks, we think, with the really great accomplishments of the age in fiction. The house of Bracken had fallen on decadent days. The beautiful daughter, Helen, sought to give it a lift by finding employment in the smart Frangipani Shop, purveyors of exquisite lingerie. But one day the millionaire banker, Glint, came into the shop, looked at Helen, and a moment later, amid the intimate turmoil of lacy and silken things, crushed her in his arms. And from that day forward Helen's life and that of the house of Bracken were written in a new book. Here is a piece of work that is that best of all things—a good story. It is more—a gripping study of the mental and spiritual growth of a present-day, sophisticated group of people, each determined to work out his own end.

YOU have known, as we have, types of men who should never have married wives, sensitive, lovely women, the while other things, business, for instance, held their

real interest. Some one had said of Austin: "He didn't need a wife. He is married to orchids or beetles or jungle mud or something inhuman. He has installed Martha on Murray Hill as Exhibit A—or, rather B." And she was just that, an exhibit—until— But read Mildred Cram's remarkable story, "Exhibit B," in the June AINSLEE'S. No better short story will fall to your lot in any magazine this month. And it is but one of a number of short stories by Mildred Cram which AINSLEE'S will feature in the coming issues.

WHEN Jacqueline Herron drove off from the dance in Larry Tait's car she little guessed that she was setting foot on one of the last paths of peril which she would tread. Yet the biggest part of her life's adventures still lay before her. The second part of Winston Bouvé's gripping two-part story, "Peril," will appear in the June AINSLEE'S. No need, if you have already started the tale, to tell you to watch for the end of it.

THE purging of a soul which clings to its evil as its one distinction is a doubtful undertaking. Steve, according to his own estimate, was the "worst man in Europe." He was in America temporarily for the consummation of his marriage to Connie Hershel, wealthy widow, who was to round out his social success. Twombly, who had known him from his kilts, lunched with him one day at the Brevort. And before that lunch was over, Twombly had begun to organize the events that were to call Steve's bluff for all time. Ernest L. Starr's "The Worst Man in Europe," is a strong tale of a man's emotional and more sensational side. We recommend it to you as an extraordinary short story.

In the June AINSLEE'S also the up-to-the-minute New York theatrical comment is brought to you—brilliantly administered and with a deft humor which many imitate and, so far, none have achieved. Let Dorothy Parker beguile you into a hearty laugh and set you right on the latest playgoing chat by following her department, "In Broadway Playhouses," exclusively in AINSLEE'S each month.

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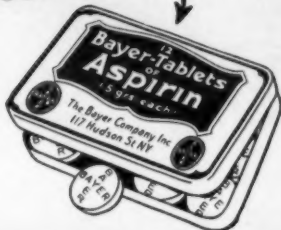
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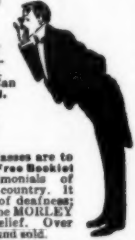
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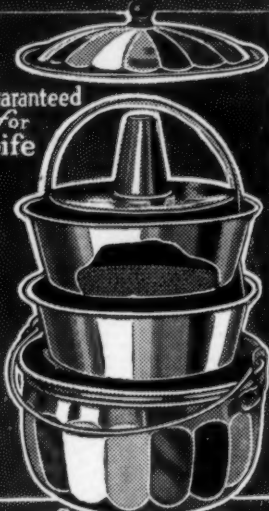
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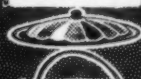
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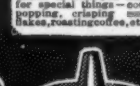
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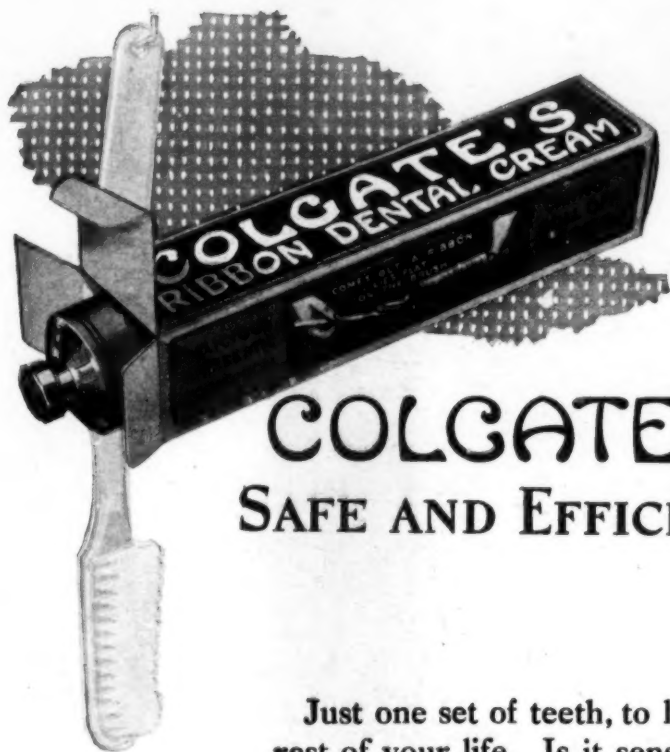


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